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issue 06

A LOVE LETTER TO ALTERNATIVE CULTURE

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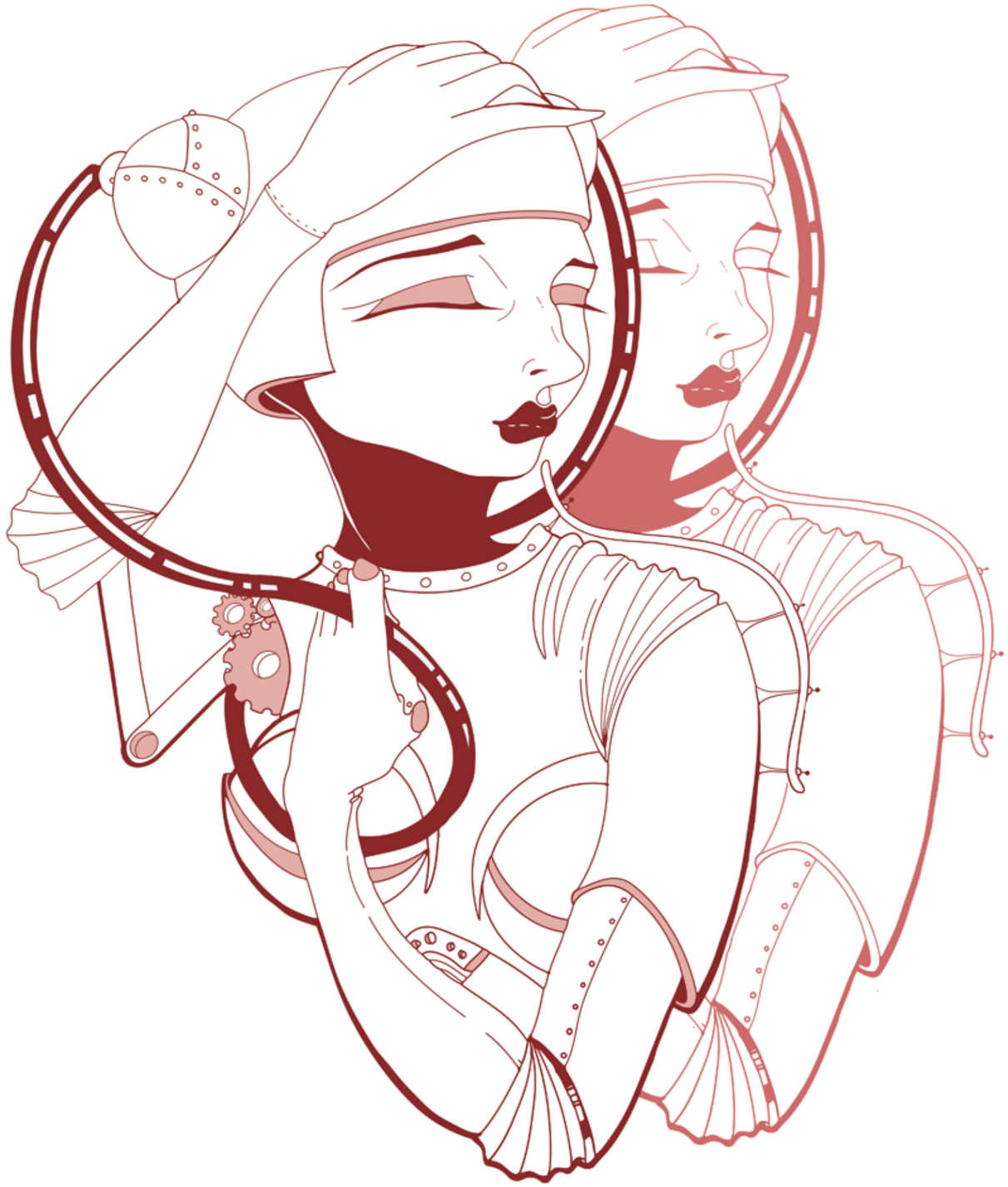


INFORM

"I see a hundred million lonely mutants; they are glowing in their dark despair. But I'm telling you hold on, hold on. Tomorrow we'll be there."

KLAUS NOMI
PAGE 40

ILLUSTRATION Zoetica Ebb

ON THE OUTER EDGES OF SENSE

Interview by **Olga Drenda**
Illustrations by **Paul Homoda**

It's a busy year for Blixa Bargeld. His infamous shriek, compared by friend and colleague Nick Cave to "the sound of strangled cats and dying children," is being heard across two continents this fall. The legendary leader of Berlin's iconic industrial savages turned exquisite poets, Einstürzende Neubauten, has been celebrating their thirtieth anniversary as a band with a tour.

Back in the 80s, they used to set the stage on fire (literally), drill holes in walls and floors of the venues they played in, and maneuver burning oil and shopping carts to create a musical frame for urban rituals, a soundtrack to the anxiety and fear of concrete city dwellers. These days, complex structures built of metal barrels and jet turbines become sophisticated musical instruments rather than machines of doom. The band's thirtieth anniversary tour gives fans an opportunity to follow Neubauten's sound evolution. The set lists – varying with every city visited — feature the band's output from the mid-1980s until today: from the primal expressions of suffering in 1985's Seele Brennt to the poetic soundscapes of 2008's Nagorny Karabach.

The extensive tour is nearly simultaneous with the activities of ANBB, Blixa's new collaboration with uncompromising sound explorer Carsten Nicolai, better known as Alva Noto. The electronic music duo formula is perfectly tailored for the needs of both Bargeld and Nicolai, giving each of them enough space to showcase his considerable skills. Alva Noto is indefatigable in his exploration of auditory frontiers, generating an avalanche of unimaginable frequencies while Blixa flaunts the expanse of his extensive vocal range. Together they manage to create a very enjoyable piece of uneasy listening.

This interview was conducted in the noble old city of Poznan, before an ANBB concert, which took place in a surprising venue, namely a former Prussian imperial castle, currently modified to showcase various expressions of modern art. It was just a few weeks before the release of ANBB's Mimikry LP. Once an impossibly thin, leather-clad prophet of the apocalypse, now a cosmopolitan polymath and experimental music veteran, Blixa Bargeld sounded elated about his newest incarnation.

I RECALL FROM YOUR PAST INTERVIEWS A DECLARATION OF NOT BEING INTERESTED IN EXPLORING NEW MUSIC ANYMORE.
That was quite a while ago.

DO YOU FEEL DIFFERENT NOW?
Yes. I think it has happened twice in my life already, when I wasn't happy with what was happening in music. It always took a while, and I managed to find some altogether different way of accessing music. The ways of consuming music in my particular lifetime have already changed about three or four times. I grew up with vinyl records, cassettes, radio, and the music we recorded from the radio. Then serious radio stations and radio shows disappeared, and the same happened with cassettes – it became more or less illegal to record music from the radio. Then came the CD, which is also about to disappear. There are no more local record shops – almost all of them are gone. In their day, they functioned as an information resource. And since all that is gone, it is not so much that I've lost interest in music as the fact that the actual form of accessing and finding something has changed several times over. Right now, when I find interesting music, it usually happens thanks to the Internet.

NOW YOU'RE VERY BUSY WITH ANBB, YOUR PROJECT WITH ALVA NOTO. THE FIRST ALBUM IS JUST ABOUT TO BE RELEASED, BUT YOU'VE BEEN WORKING TOGETHER SINCE 2007.
I've known him since the mid-or early nineties. He called me one day, came by, and we had dinner several times after that, but didn't actually work together until a couple of years ago.

DID YOU PLAN TO MAKE A RECORD FROM THE BEGINNING, OR JUST TO PERFORM LIVE?
We had a trial performance in San Francisco. We rehearsed for a day or two, performed, and shortly after, we decided to work on what could become a record. Then I got very sick and couldn't sing, so the whole process took much longer than it was meant to.

The record is born out of live performance. In contrast to what is normal in electronic formations, it has a lot of live material, lots of space left for possible changes every time. Also, now we perform one or two previously unplayed or unrecorded pieces every night, which means I tell Carsten that I don't want to hear anything before the show, in order to be completely surprised by what comes out on stage. We try to develop more process-oriented things, which can be manipulated live, which can happen live. The results appear live in front of the audience rather than just by a push of a button.

PEOPLE WHO ATTEND YOUR LIVE SHOWS OFTEN SAY THAT THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE LIVE PERFORMANCE AND THE RECORDED MATERIAL ON ANBB'S RET MARUT HANDSHAKE EP IS SIGNIFICANT – WITH THE EP BEING SURPRISINGLY QUIET AND CALM. THAT CAUSES SHOCK AT THE FAIRLY WILD LIVE PERFORMANCES.
There's probably more of a technical side to that. The way we're performing, for example, *Ret Marut Handshake*, it's not exactly the same as on the record, but it's the same sound and the same voice. Everything, in that sense, is the same, but at the live show you might be standing in front of a PA that makes it five times as loud. Live you can do much more extreme things with sound, while on a record you're still limited. The vinyl format we chose for the EP is really technically finite. I was never so conscious of that, but Carsten is working so much with sinus sounds and pure physical frequencies – the kind of things you can't put on a record during the vinyl fabrication process. I always knew you could not put something on the left channel and then on the right channel, because the needle would break off in the process of manufacturing the vinyl. So there can only be a little bit to the left and a little bit to the right. Due to these kinds of technical limitations, we had to change frequencies for *I Wish I Was a Mole in the Ground*, because they couldn't be put on vinyl. It seems that both things point in the same direction. The live performance has to be very different, because we come from a different technical medium. Standing in front of a PA gives you a completely different feeling, a more physically-based world of these electronic sounds than can be experienced through CDs or through vinyl. On a CD you can, of course, do more extreme things; you can manufacture them, but you lack the *dirtiness* of the PA. There is certainly something dirty about it: you can't make a pure sound through half a kilometer of cables, microphones, and analog stuff in between.

SO IT TAKES A LIVE PERFORMANCE TO HAVE A REAL TASTE OF THE LIMITS OF SOUND?
Yes, but as I've said, a lot of the recorded stuff comes from the live performances, and the two become very similar.

DID VERUSCHKA, THE LEGENDARY MODEL OF THE '60S, CONTRIBUTE A LOT TO YOUR NEW ALBUM, *MIMIKRY*? HER PORTRAIT APPEARS ON THE COVER, AND YOU CAN HEAR HER VOICE ON THE RECORD, ON THE TRACKS "MIMIKRY" AND "KATZE."
She is an old friend of mine. Carsten first had the idea for her to do something for "Mimikry" because of her photography, then I invited her to the studio and conducted a type of interview: I asked a question, she answered, I recorded. On the record there is one sentence by Veruschka – it's not even credited – where she says, "And then everybody says to me, why don't you do it on Photoshop; it's so much easier!" Then she starts laughing.

Veruschka is, you can say, a "cat lady." She always has about seven or eight cats at home. There was a two-by-three-meter paper hanging at the studio, on which I made notes that followed different association fields – it's actually part of the record sleeve now. One day, Carsten introduced me to a new edit of a piece we improvised and I immediately wrote down "A cat." From there on, the association with a cat was there and Carsten said, "Maybe I should ask Veruschka to imitate her cats." And he did. She performed with us yesterday. It was new for her to do something like that.

"THE SCIENTIFIC APPROACH" IS A PHRASE FREQUENTLY USED TO DESCRIBE ANBB, FOR EXAMPLE IN REFERENCE TO THE LYRICS OF "ELECTRICITY IS FICTION," INSPIRED BY SCHROEDINGER'S QUOTE.
There's only one piece of text there that's not only inspired by but is Schroedinger. But it isn't really Schroedinger – it's me, imitating him. That's the point! It's very funny because, in the first review, I read somebody wrote about a sample from somebody else. Well, it is Schroedinger, but it isn't Schroedinger, because it's me.

COULD YOU TALK MORE ABOUT YOUR PROCESS OF CREATING LYRICS? IN THE PAST, YOU'VE MENTIONED A DATABASE OF YOUR COLLECTED THOUGHTS AND OBSERVATIONS, YOUR OWN APPROACH TO THE CUT-UP METHOD.
It's not exactly cut-ups, but it is one of the ways I do things. I went to the recording studio four days ago and recorded a piece for some friends of mine in San Francisco. They told me there was only one limitation: it has to have something to do with flight. That was very instant. I went to my database. First I put in "flight," then I put in "airplane," then "airport," et cetera. Generally I search not only in my database – I look things up on the Internet, on Wikipedia. I take whatever seems to be useful. I did end up collecting a couple of thoughts and observations from my database and turning those into text for that piece. For ANBB, I tried to invent something diametrically opposite to Neubauten. With all these methods, I always succeed only a little, so some songs might still sound like Neubauten. I have done well in a couple of pieces, which seemingly say something, but nobody would be able to tell you what they're all about, because both are just collections of words. I wanted them to be fairly ego-free and on the outer edges of sense. For some of them it worked quite fine.

SOME OF YOUR EARLIER RECORDS SEEM TO FORECAST THIS KIND OF WRITING. FOR EXAMPLE, ON *KLAVIERMUSIK* (ONE OF THE ALBUMS FROM NEUBAUTEN'S MORE EXPERIMENTAL "MUSTERHAUS" SERIES), THERE IS A TRACK CALLED "KATOWICE." WHAT IS THE ORIGIN OF THIS NAME AND WHAT IS ITS CONNECTION WITH A CITY IN POLAND?

“I don’t want to HEAR ANYTHING before the show, in order to be completely surprised by what comes out on stage.”

It’s Henryk Mikołaj Górecki’s hometown. I originally wrote this around 1987 or 1988, in a place where I was sleeping in Munich. There was a piano there and I started to play it at night, very quietly, so the neighbors couldn’t hear me. I had a very hissy dictaphone cassette of it, which I gave to a composer and pianist who made the record with us. He just transcribed it.
I quoted Katowice because of Henryk Mikolaj Gorecki, whom I didn’t begin to listen to because of “Symphony of Sorrowful Songs” but because of a wonderful piece called “Lerchenmusik.” That was a first piece by Gorecki I’d heard, and it really moved me. There is a bit of its speed and probably of its slowness there.

THE RAILWAY STATION IN KATOWICE IS QUITE FAMOUS NOW, AS IT’S SAID TO BE THE MOST REPULSIVE PLACE IN EUROPE – NOT BECAUSE OF THE ARCHITECTURE, WHICH IS ACTUALLY STUNNINGLY BEAUTIFUL, BUT BECAUSE IT’S TERRIBLY UNKEMPT AND INHABITED BY JUNKIES.

Central railway stations have this tendency, yes. As for the Berlin Central Station, the new one… Well, when railroads were first built all around Europe, cities boomed around railroad stations, which replaced the church and the cathedral as the center of the city. Now you leave the Central Station in Berlin, look around, see nothing and wonder, where is Berlin? Behind the station, you have the Parliament building, which is bizarre already – and in front of the station, there is nothing. *Currywurst* and *Baustelle* (curry sausages and building sites). Of course, according to optimistic visions, in ten years there will be nothing but flowering landscapes around.

The old Central Station in Berlin was just like you described the one in Katowice, full of junkies and untidy. The new one belongs to the new generation of central stations, which are not central anymore. Today there was a large demonstration against the nuclear politics of the German government and a Neo-Nazi demonstration as well. So, when I arrived at the station around 11:20 a.m., I saw an ocean of flags waving towards the government district. They planned to circle around the entire district. It must have been an interesting day in Berlin today.

THERE IS A CERTAIN SYNCHRONICITY BETWEEN THE ANBB RELEASE AND THE NEUBAUTEN ANNIVERSARY TOUR, WHICH ALSO STARTS IN OCTOBER.

Synchronicity, hmm. I am finishing the ANBB tour, then I’m going to rehearse for two weeks, and then I’m leaving for the Neubauten tour. Then I am going to stay in San Francisco for a couple of months, then go back to Europe and play with Carsten again.

***MIMIKRY* CONTAINS TWO COVERS: HARRY NILSON’S “ONE” AND THE FOLK CLASSIC “I WISH I WAS A MOLE IN THE GROUND.” IT’S BEEN A LONG TIME SINCE YOU RECORDED A COVER SONG, AND IT SEEMS THAT THE CLASSICS ARE YOUR FAVORITE CHOICE.**

A song is only worth covering when you see something in it that could be yours, and if it’s possible to give the song some new quality. I am not necessarily interested in radically rethinking the whole material, but I try to see it constructed in a new way. Regarding “One,” I’d already had this track on my desktop for two years, and was looking for a chance to cover it.

IT’S BEEN RECORDED IN COUNTLESS VERSIONS BY VARIOUS ARTISTS.

It has been immensely popular. Harry Nilson was a professional songwriter, not writing songs necessarily for himself but for others. I have heard maybe two or three songs that he actually performed himself. The cadence, that monotonous “pim pim pim pim” throughout the song, is actually in Nilsson’s original version. That’s one of the reasons why I wanted to do this using electronics. Carsten rebuilt the whole thing just with a sinus note. There’s no actual instrument playing – it’s just editing of one sinus note. As for the quality of the lyrics, it’s a love song about loss, but reduced to a mathematical formula. One, two, and so

"something

to invent

metrically

SOMEONE SAID THAT IF THERE WAS ANY OTHER MUSIC ACT TO COMPARE ANBB TO, IT WOULD BE SUICIDE. DO YOU AGREE?

MUSIC IS YOUR PRIMARY MEDIUM, BUT FAR FROM THE ONLY ONE. APART FROM ACTING (BOTH IN THEATRE AND FILM), WRITING POETRY AND PROSE, PHOTOGRAPHING HOTEL BATHROOMS (THE "SERIALBATHROOMDUMMYRUN" PROJECT), YOU'VE BEEN

cite to Neubauten?"

CARRYING OUT "EXECUTION OF PRECIOUS MEMORIES" SINCE THE EARLY '90S. IT'S A LOCATION-SPECIFIC PERFORMANCE, FORMED AROUND GATHERING MEMORIES FROM LOCALS WITH A QUESTIONNAIRE YOU DEVISED, THEN RECORDING THEM AND SETTING THEM TO MUSIC. HAVE YOU HEARD THAT THIS QUESTIONNAIRE IS BEING CALLED A MODEL SURVEY BY ANTHROPOLOGISTS?

IT'S TRUE. IN KRAKOW, THE FACULTY OF CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY HAD A WORKSHOP WHERE YOUR QUESTIONNAIRE WAS PRESENTED EXACTLY AS THE MODEL SURVEY FOR ANTHROPOLOGY OF MEMORY.

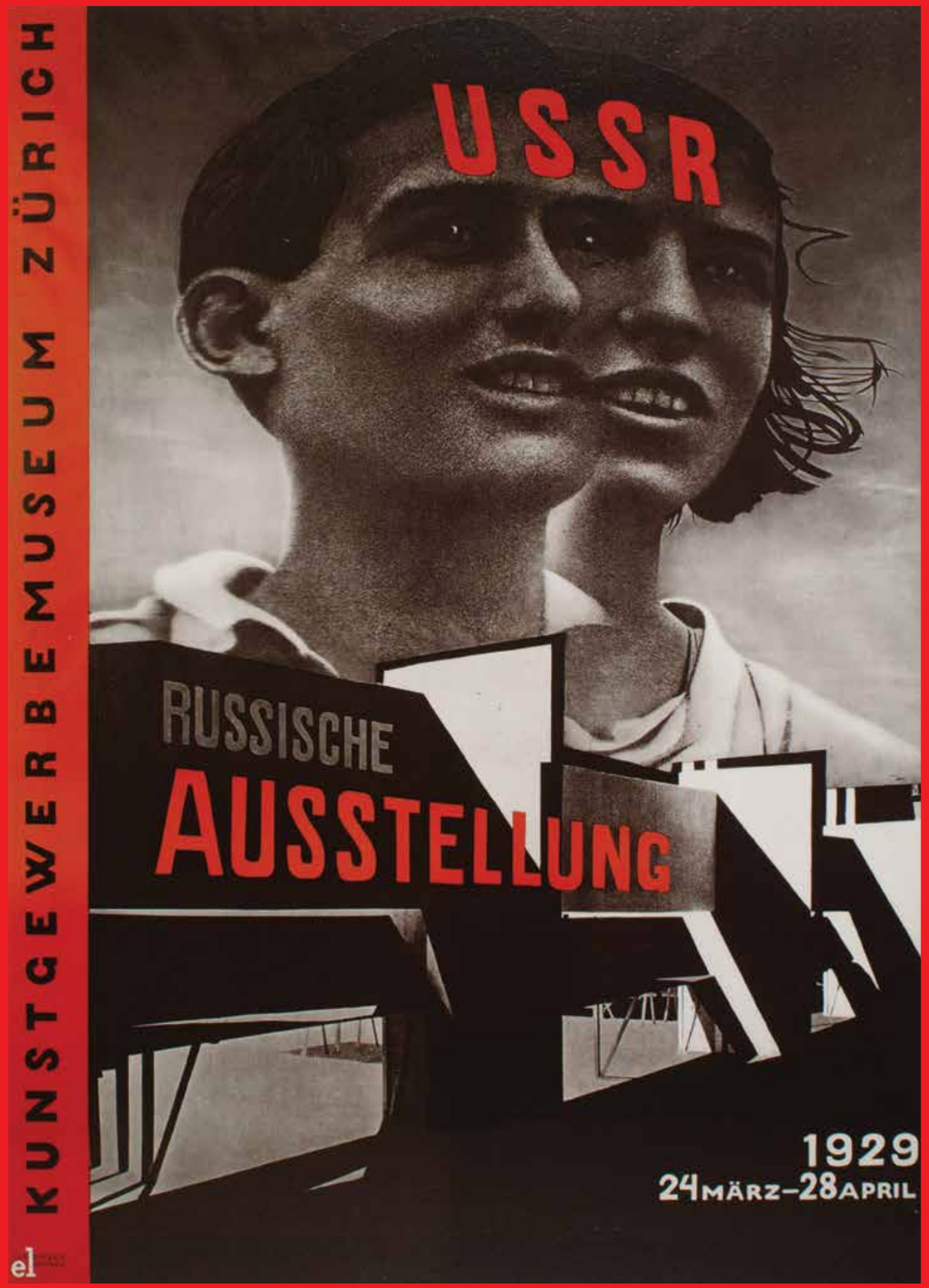
A NEW FACET SEEMS TO BE SURFACING IN YOUR RECENT WORK: IRONY. IT'S NOTICEABLE BOTH IN YOUR LATEST BOOK, CREATIVE TOUR DIARY ***EUROPA KREUZWEISE***, AND IN YOUR AUDIO INTERPRETATION OF NICK CAVE'S NOVEL, ***THE DEATH OF BUNNY MUNRO.***

IS HUMOR A QUALITY YOU PLAN TO INTRODUCE INTO YOUR WORK MORE FREQUENTLY?

IS THERE A LOT TO TELL?

OLGA DRENDA

PAUL KOMODA



Poster for the Russian Exhibition at the Kunstgewerbemuseum, Zürich. 1929. Lithography.

PART ONE

HOW THE NAUGHTY LITTLE SQUARE BECAME A CUBE AT LAST

Wherein the author commences with the biographical portrait, in words.

Modern-day Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, and Belarus – yes, Belarus, that staunch and stiff-upper-lipped autocratic holdout, that last of the great European dictatorships – were, in 1890, provinces of Russia. At that time, European powers were dividing up Africa, the New World, and parts of Asia with unflinching imperial bravado, and here in the USA, Oklahoma had just been declared a territory. Also, and more relevantly, the czars were still in charge. In fact, the revolutions that officially overthrew them, turning the Russian empire into the Communist state that would govern for the next seventy-odd years, were still a twinkle in Lenin's eye. (He was twenty years old.) Alexander III was, therefore, still lording it over his subjects with the zeal of a Slavophile, and with that came certain policies, many of which were long-standing.

In the time of the czars, a Jewish fellow, upstanding citizen though he may be, was officially, as any government bureaucrat would regretfully admit, an enemy of Christ. The government acknowledged one of the largest Jewish populations in the world and usually allowed them to exist legally, but only under strict and limited conditions. Most government posts were banned to Jews. Travel, education, arts, and publishing were constricted down to cultural trickles, and in those provinces where the Jewish people were most densely collected, townships called *shtetls* sprang up, the oldest dating back almost a millennium. These were reservoirs for those cultural springs, collecting them into regions of comparative stability where they might survive the myriad of backwards phrenological skull-touching that was the philosophy of persecution and oppression against them.

Into one such *shtetl* called Pochinok, in the Russian Province of Smolensk, Lazar Markovich Lissitzky was born on November 23, 1890. He had not yet become the famous "El Lissitzky," but he already showed his talent as a child – enough so, in fact, that he was sent to the city of Vitebsk, in that modern-day Belarus, to develop said talent under the instruction of the well-respected artist Jehuda Pen. The bustling capital of Moscow was several hundreds of kilometers to the east, and various outposts of Kaiser-bred, German artistic flimflammery were several hundreds of kilometers to the west. Art Nouveau was twiddling its thumbs in Prague, and soon there would be vast empty spots longing for black squares. El Lissitzky was born into an age that was waiting for him to define it.

He began instructing students when he was only fifteen years old, but in spite of this early promise, government quotas against Jews seeking higher education kept him from the halls of the St. Petersburg Art Academy. This devastating rejection was delivered in 1909. However, a door, as they say, was opened in another direction, one that would guide Lissitzky in his art for the rest of his life: the study of architecture in Darmstadt, Germany.

Many young Russians, Jewish and otherwise, were making their way to Germany in those days. It was a chance to taste the wonders of the West, to allow intellectual, hedonistic, and emotional infusions to steep and percolate and boil over until those young men, flush with ideas and inspiration, acted on them, guiding Mother Russia into the twentieth century with new enthusiasm. Lissitzky traveled throughout Europe, famously trekking on foot the length of Italy, and with each step his

Proun (1919-23). Lithography.

EL LISSITZKY

WAS BORN INTO AN AGE THAT WAS WAITING FOR HIM TO *DEFINE* IT.

Give Us More Tanks! with Nikolai Troshin. 1942. Lithography.

passion was molded into a focus that was stark and serious. His purpose became the artistic celebration of his Jewish culture. But it was a very different impetus that led him back to Russia: the commencement of the First World War.

Upon his return, Lissitzky took a position in a Moscow architectural firm, but he also worked as an artist, illustrating Passover stories and Yiddish children's books. Lissitzky's painting style of that period is often compared to the whimsical work of Marc Chagall, but the important steps he was taking at this stage had everything to do with his energy, his existence, as it flowed simultaneously through the worlds of architecture and of painting, two worlds that would meet in construct soon enough.

The revolutions, first against the Russian Empire and then against the Provisional Government, changed everything, including policies toward Jews. No longer restricted by quotas, laws, or oppressive doctrine, Jewish culture under the Bolsheviks was finally free to flourish. It was Marc Chagall himself who invited El Lissitzky back to the city of Vitebsk to instruct at the newly formed People's Art School. Soon he was teaching not only architecture, but also various graphic arts and printing. The revolution had opened new opportunities for Jewish students, and the young minds, as well as the young State, were an open book for Lissitzky, waiting to be designed, to be fashioned, to be made into permanent cultural monuments. Another instructor at the new school was the artist Kazimir Malevich, who brought with him something bigger than the educational institution to which he belonged, and that was Suprematism. Perhaps five years old at that point, Suprematist ideas of stark geometry, abstract and spiritual, began to take over, and soon Malevich's famous black square on a white background loomed like a monolith over the art world.

Lissitzky worked with Malevich on several projects, including the design of the Malevich book *On the New System of Art*. Lissitzky's poster art from this period was birthed under stalled Suprematist clockworks, assuring his immortality. Among them is *Beat the Whites with the Red Wedge* – a poster widely recognizable to this day, if not as a Lissitzky work, then at least as an inspiration for various album covers (e.g., the *Berlin EP* by German post-punk band MDK) and flyer graphics employed by socially dissatisfied but politically enthusiastic youth.

El Lissitzky, meanwhile, was torn between the more classical ideals of Chagall and the rash new concepts put forth by the Suprematists. Eventually he let Malevich lead him and others into forming the Suprematist group UNOVIS (exponents for The New Art), which worked as a collective from 1920 to 1922, signing their work, where appropriate (when it wasn't a ballet or opera), with a black square. Shortly before this group disbanded, Lissitzky left the school and made his way back to Germany, following the opportunity to begin working on exhibition design, among other things. His work with exhibition design would soon prove to be one of the most important aspects of his life as an artist, and he made himself famous in many parts of Europe playing this role. It was then, in the early 1920s, that he first became ill with pneumonia and then tuberculosis. His energies were much engaged, however, and in spite of the illness he had begun his own style of abstract, geometric paintings very much based on Suprematist work, but adding spatial qualities, and these were his "Proun" pieces. Far more social and political in nature, these *Prounen* helped Lissitzky form his vision of a new Russia and share that vision with the people.

Chad Gadya. 1922. Letterpress.

Der Wolkenbügel (Cloud-Iron). 1924-25. Photomontage, retouched.

PART TWO

WHEREIN THE AUTHOR CONCEIVES OF A HYPOTHETICAL FINE ARTS EXHIBIT IN ORDER TO ILLUSTRATE THE SCOPE AND HISTORY OF EL LISSITZKY'S WORK

The following exhibit is an invention original to this article and, indeed, to *Coilhouse*. If anyone wishes to bring it into physical existence, they will merely be required to pay the appropriate fees to Lucas Lanthier, *Coilhouse*, and the estate of El Lissitzky, but the millions of invested dollars will most certainly be worth it.
WITHOUT FURTHER ADO:

Entrance foyer, exhibits G1-G7 refer to appendices 101 and 110 (detail): Sideways skyscrapers; office buildings straddling Moscow streets – models, drawings, bureaucratic paper trail of these architectural designs for the Moscow Boulevard Ring.

East wall, whitewashed. Vertical displays in evenly spaced columns: Trotsky exile and other propaganda paintings.

West wall, graywashed. Horizontal displays in evenly spaced rows: exhibition and conference minutiae of Lissitzky works from Germany and abroad. These should span the important work he created from the mid-1920s through the 1930s when designing and decorating exhibitions for Russian art in other countries, as well as provide examples of where and when his own work was exhibited.

Centerpiece: large square pasted with letters, essays and articles detailing Lissitzky's relationship with Suprematist mentor Kazimir Malevich. Proceeding to either side of the square, we realize that it is, in fact, a cube and there are more letters, essays, and articles discussing the integration of spatial elements into Suprematist ideals. On the opposite face of the cube are hung two or three examples of Lissitzky's *Proun* works. Beneath them, running at a 25-degree angle (to the floor), is the quotation defining *Proun* as "the station where one changes from painting to architecture." The quotation is in German, Russian, and English in various shades of gray, one below the other like a cloudy Constructivist rainbow.

On the far wall, the propaganda poster *Beat the Whites with the Red Wedge* juxtaposed with a "worker" (live human standing 1 meter to the side, 1 meter forward) repeating, in exclamation, "New symbols, created by the artist to be used in a new world created by the people!"

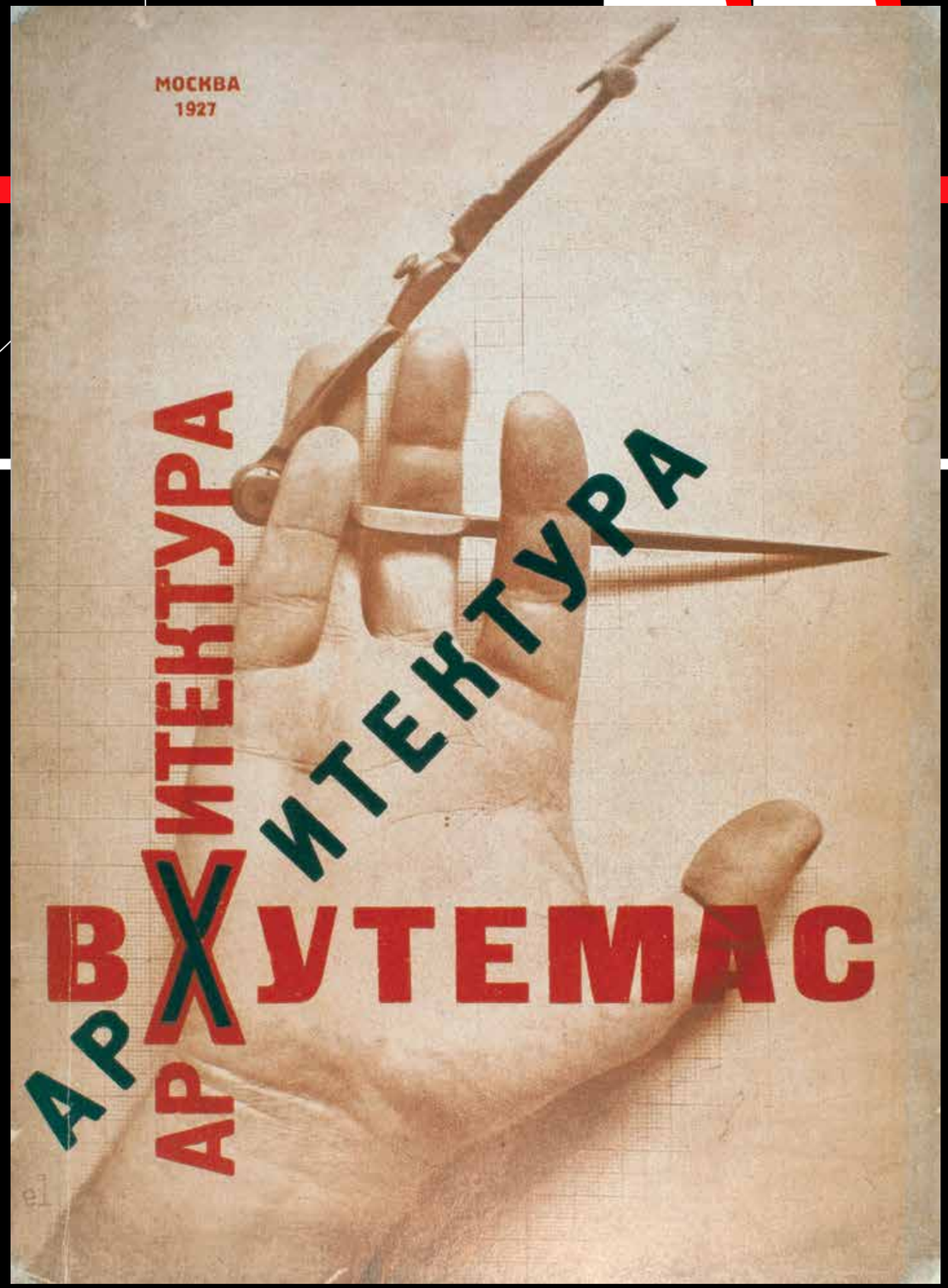
Steps to the left and right sides of entrance foyer; Left: 12 count, landing, 3 count, 90-degree turn to the right; step depth 24 cm, height 19 cm. Right: 10 count, landing, 5 count, 90-degree turn to the left; step depth 24 cm, height 19 cm. Both staircases in accordance with Elementarism.

Second-floor landing: typography. Second-floor far wall, a live theatrical production of the Lissitzky children's book *About 2 Squares*. One actor is the Earth, and the two squares are also portrayed by actors. There are title cards printed with Lissitzky's typography for the book.

Second-floor centerpiece: photomontage, including a ceiling-to-floor mosaic of Lissitzky's sole physical architectural work, the former print shop for *Ogonyok* magazine at 1st Samotechny Lane in Moscow, and comprised of smaller photos of the building in different shades of light due to weather and natural light fluctuations.

Second-floor alcove 1a: two Russian revolutionaries seated on the ground, listening to German and French artists (designated by their spoken language), reading them passages from *Veshch/Gegenstand/Objet*, the trilingual art journal started by Lissitzky and Ilja Ehrenburg in Berlin, 1921.

Second-floor alcove 1b: Russian revolutionaries reading passages from *Veshch/Gegenstand/Objet* to German and French artists. This is a gesture of the living language.



Cover for VKhUTEMAS Architecture. Moscow. 1927. Letterpress.

PART THREE

WHEREIN THE AUTHOR SUMMARILY TREATS US WITH THE LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE LIFE AND WORK OF THE ARTIST, IN PROPAGANDA SLOGAN FORMAT.

In 1941 El Lissitzky succumbed to the tuberculosis that had worn away at him for almost two decades. One of his last works was a poster meant to bolster the war effort against Germany, which read, "*Davaite pobolshe tankov!*" ("Give Us More Tanks!") Reflecting on his life and work, I would like to share some more slogans that, while unadorned by abstract forms, may nevertheless illustrate aspects of El Lissitzky in appropriate propagandist style:

A WORTHWHILE PROJECT IS ONE THAT PORTRAYS AND AFFIRMS THE NEW!

*

Tuberculosis shall not be an impediment in the construction of new symbols, at least not for a while!

BOOKS AND BOOK DESIGN ARE WONDERFUL OPPORTUNITIES TO CREATE MONUMENTS THAT ARE NOT STATIC!

International exhibition design can be lucrative and rewarding, and help make one rather famous!

GIVE US MORE TANKS!

Socialist REALISM

3!!!

SOVIET STATE FACE OF THE MAY BE THE NEW

Typography CAN BE

POWERFUL, TIMELESS, AND UTILITARIAN!

STALIN GETS! STALIN WANTS,

WHAT

MODERNITY TEMPERED BY CONSTRUCTIONIST IDEALS WILL PROVIDE SYMBOLS FOR THE FUTURE, FROM BOOKS TO ARCHITECTURE!

Sometimes the avant-garde must be forgone in order to avoid being blacklisted and to stay on the various State art commissions!

The Red Army needs plenty of support via poster art!

One's wife, especially if that wife is named Sophie Küppers-Lissitzky, is a great help and indispensable when one's illness is making the execution of commissions difficult!

WHEN ONE HAS A SON, ONE MAY ASSEMBLE A PHOTOMONTAGE HONORING HIM AND HIS FUTURE WITHIN THE STATE BY INCLUDING FACTORY SMOKESTACKS IN THE IMAGE!

AND FINALLY, ONE'S ART CAN VERY MUCH BE ALIGNED

WITH SOCIAL AND POLITICAL CAUSES!

LUCAS LANTHIER is known for his work with The Deadfly Ensemble - an off-kilter, dreamy, post-folk quintet – and also with the self-described "artsy-gothy-post-punk" group Cinema Strange. But this jive-quipping, lion-maned rake's got more than six albums and throngs of fans to show for himself. In addition to diligently honing his mastery of celluloid, mixology, and fine pipe tobaccos, Lanthier writes surreal short fiction, fairy tales and ghost stories, as well as nonfiction essays, humor pieces and music columns.

Life is a (nude) Cabaret
image: teamrockstarimages.com
ZIVITY
30 days. free. http://zivity.com/coilhouse code: coilhouse

Don't You Stop We Won't Stop

Christina Kelly interviews

Kathleen Hanna

It was either 1991 or '92, the first time I saw Bikini Kill play, in New York City. The show was full of riot grrrls. They ranged in age from young teenagers to women in their 20s. Lots wore thrift store dresses with cardigans and glasses, and possibly, necklaces made from Shrinky Dinks that proclaimed "Girl Power" or "Revolution Girl Style Now." Backstage, Ian Svenonius from The Nation of Ulysses drew Sharpie tattoos on everyone. Then Kathleen Hanna, an Ivory Girl beauty in punk clothes, took the stage. She screamed, "Suck my left one!" Petite as she was, Kathleen oozed rage. She was furious about the injustices girls faced, and she made it okay for them to express their outrage, too.

The riot grrrl movement was in its full flower, birthed by Kathleen and Tobi Vail, the drummer for the Olympia, WA-based Bikini Kill, as well as the members of the Washington, D.C.-based band Bratmobile. Outside the club, riot grrrls had been selling their Xeroxed zines and giving out flyers for upcoming meetings. In these zines, which had names like *Girl Germs*, *Jigsaw*, and *Riot Grrrl*, Kathleen and her fellow revolutionaries challenged girls to pick up instruments and start bands. Even more importantly, it dared them to stand up for their rights, to not let themselves be belittled. To express and own their anger. To be feminists. But also not to be ashamed of being girls, full of contradictions. BK's catchy anthem "Rebel Girl" went like this: "Rebel girl, you are the queen of my world/I want to take you home/I want to try on your clothes."

Kathleen, who had been an intern at a center for abuse victims and had an abuse history, spoke out against sexual violence. She had been an artsy Evergreen State College student who tried her hand at photography and writing before singing in bands. Bikini Kill titled their album *Revolution Girl Style Now*. It became a rallying cry for the movement.

Unwittingly, Kathleen became the face of riot grrrl, even after Bikini Kill broke up in 1998 and she went on to play in Julie Ruin and Le Tigre. In January of 2010, Kathleen donated her papers to the Fales Library at NYU, which has started a riot grrrl archive as a division of their Downtown Collection.

I spent two mornings poring over Kathleen's archives. Lisa Darms, who founded and runs the riot grrrl collection, showed me the metal file cabinet Kathleen donated with her papers. It's covered in band and riot grrrl stickers and traveled across the country with Kathleen when she moved with Bikini Kill to Washington, D.C. to focus energies around the *Riot Grrrl* zine.

The files have since been placed in archival boxes. There are zines, lyrics on yellow lined paper, Kathleen's college records, old tax stuff, a list of riot grrrl chapters around the world. A whole folder is devoted to Evan Dando, the dreamy Lemonheads lead singer. An art show poster is tied with a ribbon. A blue three-ring binder with black-and-white contact sheets holds pictures of a long-haired, bearded Kurt Cobain, who had dated Tobi Vail in Olympia. A photo shoot depicts a young Kathleen wearing a halter top printed with an anchor.

In a manila folder labeled "Courtney Things," there are papers related to an April 10, 1996 assault case: State vs. Courtney Love. Courtney had punched, threatened, and thrown things at Kathleen at Lollapalooza. Kathleen's police statement is there. In a transcript of a radio interview, Courtney admits punching Kathleen. A letter from Kathleen's lawyer in this folder asks after her music career and says he'd like to hear what she is working on.

Xeroxes of three postcards to A&R guys at Warner Brothers, Capitol, and Interscope recall the indie vs. major label debate that raged at the time. "The Bikini Kills have decided to remain independent. Thank you for your consideration. [heart symbol], The Kills."

The contents of File Drawer #2 include a matchbook from the Royal Palace, the dingy D.C. bar where Kathleen worked as a topless dancer to pay her rent, and her Oregon driver's license, issued 5/19/95 (date of birth: 11/12/68).

The master copy of the first *Bikini Kill* zine is in there. I wrote down these words to show my seven-year-old daughter: "Bikini Kill is more than just a band or a zine or an idea; it's part of a revolution. The revolution is about going to the playground with your best girlfriends. You are hanging upside-down on the bars and all the blood is rushing to your head."

After hours snooping through Kathleen's stuff, I met her for tea near the Fales Library. She looked much the same as she did when I first saw her twenty years ago. We talked about the demise of riot grrrl, the state of feminism in music, and her plans for the future.

Photography by Ian Baker

Access to Hanna's files courtesy of the Fales Library Archive.

What made you want to donate your papers to the Fales archives?
Well, I turned forty, which was a big thing, and I wanted to clean out my basement. I just started realizing that all the videotapes I had were deteriorating, and I didn't have a budget to transfer everything, and I didn't know how to do that. I went to a talk about archiving and feminism at Fales, and I was sitting next to Lisa Darms, who wasn't even working at Fales at the time. I was joking that they should start a riot grrrl archive so I could clean out my basement. Lisa ended up getting a job at Fales a few months later. She called me, and she was like, "Hey, let's do it, for real."

Was it sad for you to let go of the stuff?
Yeah, yeah. I mean, the filing cabinet literally went on tour with my band. Bikini Kill moved from Olympia to Washington, D.C. for two years in the '90s. I got rid of all my worldly possessions, and the only thing I kept was that filing cabinet. I slept with my head against that, in the van, and it has a lot of memories. But it also feels really good to clear space in my life for new work. Because I've been so defined by the '90s, and so defined by riot grrrl, Bikini Kill stuff.

I can relate to that.
And I'm not the same person that I was.

I can relate to that, too.
And I want to make new work. I'm forty now, trying to get balance or whatever. The way I was doing it was kind of denying the past, like, "I don't give a shit about riot grrrl and Bikini Kill." But by not delving into it and honoring it, I wasn't able to move ahead. It was a way to let it go, by delving into it. It was artistic to me, to engage in this project. I had to go through every single piece of paper, and ask people for permission. It took about six months. It was emotionally heavy, especially because it's feminist work and I am so afraid of feminist work disappearing.

Have you gotten in touch with other people about donating?
Yeah, I sent out an initial email and said, "This is what I am doing. And I hope you want to do it, too." And then I put them in touch with Lisa. I want to help Lisa out, and I'd like to sway people to do it, because this is a rare opportunity.

I was interested to see your college stuff.
I thought it was really important to leave that in, but I don't want it to end up on the Internet. I don't think anyone gives a shit about my college evaluations, but I put really bad bloody tampon poetry, Feminist 101 shit from when I was nineteen in there. And a lot of "I hate my dad" kind of stuff. Because that's part of who I am, and I didn't just pop out this fully-formed feminist who's like, "I'm gonna be a punk rock singer." You know what I mean? There's a lot of developing that happened along the way that's kind of embarrassing. I didn't want to take out everything embarrassing. I'm nervous about people going in and photocopying, because the Internet is so ahistorical that people will think that that's what I am writing now. And there is stuff in there from when I was like fifteen – songs I wrote before I was ever in a band.

I'm just so impressed that you had it all. How much of that Daddy stuff that you were writing is true?
I didn't have a great childhood, and my dad does have a lot of problems. But I also did rape crisis intervention and took a lot from that and mixed it up, to disguise my own history. I don't like to talk a lot about my own particular situation. My parents are still living, and I don't want to bring stuff up for my sister; but yeah, I do have experience with it on a personal level, but I don't go into specifics. There is sexual violence in my family like in many families, and that comes out in my work.

I always assumed it was fictionalized, but there was something about looking at the actual stuff that made me wonder, "Is this real?"
It's real. Typically our personal stories don't have beginnings, middles, and ends, and so you have to fictionalize them to make them coherent to an audience. And there's disguising to make it less personal. I can't sing a song that's super personal or I'll cry every time. I have to mix in truth with untruth. But my sister did say, "Suck my left one." But parts of that song are completely fictional.

Are you close with your sister these days?
Yeah. She's in Arizona, though, so I don't see her very much.

In the Bikini Kill archive you put online, you said that you were doing it so you could let go of the good and the bad parts of being in the band. Sort of like why you donated to the archives.
Also, I'm doing my own website, and I couldn't even write a paragraph about Bikini Kill. It was so hard for me to define what we did. And we were so invested in creating community back then. And so I thought I would make a free-for-all blog where other people got to define what we did. I was expecting so much more negativity, but all the crummy '90s baggage is gone. The kids who are discovering the music now and taking it on as their own don't have that '90s bullshit, like indie vs. major sellout. It just doesn't apply anymore. And it's really great, because I'm still really proud of what we did – more now. I don't think I was able to feel that back then. Because there was so much controversy, and anger, and violence. It was hard for me to enjoy it. It's nice to sit back and enjoy that someone who wasn't even there really appreciates the CDs. It feels good to finally enjoy that, fifteen years later.

Are you in touch with your bandmates?
Yeah. Actually, the project brought up some new conversations that have been really good, so I am happy about it.

I interviewed all these young artists for a story I was writing about Lilith Fair, and it's like they don't even want to talk about feminism. And they don't even think there is sexism in the music industry anymore. *[Kathleen laughs.]* They seemed to be saying that so much progress has been made for women in music that we don't need to even talk about it.
That's funny, because that is what people said to me in the '90s that made me want to say that I am a fucking feminist. The idea that sexism doesn't exist is just silly. I think that we all have things that make us feel better about our lives. I think it would be more accurate for them to say that it exists but they don't want to look at it. I think that is a totally valid decision. A lot of times I don't want to think about things, and I just want to live my life. You can create that insular world for yourself, but you know that for the majority of women in the majority of places, that just isn't an option. I think it was the same way in the '90s. I think it really behooves women in the music industry to deny sexism. I think it is incredibly hard to admit sexism and then go out and do your thing every day. And it doesn't sell records. I can attest to that. It's not a great shtick if you want to get attention. But one thing we all learned from the '90s is this: who gives a shit about semantics, anyway? We were so hung up on the language of everything. I think what's going on in the Lilith Fair is really feminist. I'm sure that even though a lot of those performers may not consider themselves feminist, it's what you do, not what you say. If they are going up there and making interesting music, and the organizers are putting all of those totally different kinds of performers together, the message is: look at how many kinds of women there are, look at how many different kinds of music women make. It really expands the definition of what women can do. And that in itself is a much larger statement than any individual performer saying, "I'm not a feminist."

The girl from Metric kept saying, "Gender is not a genre."
It's a great line.

Her point was that these women are all making interesting music and doing well, and it's not a pity party. She didn't want to have a conversation about feminism.
That's kind of depressing to me, but whatever gets you through the day. There's room for everyone's opinion. It's not my opinion.

"TYPICALLY OUR PERSONAL STORIES DON'T HAVE BEGINNGS, MIDDLES, & ENDS."

But people coming to the forefront and saying sexual violence exists – that's a pity party? That's just really sad and uneducated. I don't want to call her specifically uneducated. It's crazy.

I just started writing again, because I took some time off, and after I was a writer, I was an editor, so I hadn't done much interviewing for over ten years. I felt like I had been Rip Van Winkle and had been asleep for ten years, and everything was different.
I call myself Rip Van Riot Grrrl.

Funny. I was like, "There's a whole new attitude now, and I have to acclimate myself."
As we were talking about a few minutes ago, both you and I have gotten trapped in being known for something associated with the '90s. I'm proud of what I have done, but at the same time, there are times when I see a group like LCD Sound System, and they are recording their album in a mansion in LA, and blah blah blah. And because I've been defined as a feminist, I'm just going to get asked to play benefits for the rest of my life. There are certain expectations if you are a political artist. I remember being critical of female musicians like L7 and Babes in Toyland who didn't want to talk about feminism. But looking back, I'm like, "Why *would* they want to step into this territory, where every question they are asked for the rest of their lives is about their gender?" It makes sense for women like them to say, "I don't want to talk about that." And even come up with some cool lines about why they don't want to talk about it. Because when you are a woman and you are in a band, nine times out of ten all you get asked about is your gender or what shoes you are wearing onstage. You don't get asked about the music. And as a *feminist* artist, you get asked questions about gender and about feminism, and the state of feminism, and why aren't there more girl bands and do women make music different than men, and blah blah blah, but still, you don't get asked about your music. So I can really understand, and I can relate to why.

I remember a lot of infighting in riot grrrl.
I was going to use the word infighting. I can actually trace it back to three specific individuals. When I look back, I realize these three women totally derailed this movement. We should have all said, "Fuck you, go away. You need to get help for your mental problems and not come here and derail our meetings." But so many of the people who were drawn to riot grrrl came from families that weren't super stable. A lot of us were not the girls with the most self-esteem in the world. We didn't have this stable base to look at somebody and go, "Fuck you." Now I realize that part of being a feminist is being strong enough to be able to challenge other women and have productive dialogues. It's not just being a yes man. That's something that I want to write about, do interviews about, and talk on TV about: how do we have difficult conversations with each other, and how do we walk away from unproductive dialogue? I didn't know how to do that, and a lot of my friends didn't know how to do that. I think that is really why riot grrrl crumbled. I just got out. I just left. I wish now that I would have stood up and fought.

In something that you wrote online called *Kathleen's Herstory*, you said that you backed away because it was becoming too associated with your name and it was the work of a lot of people.
That's true too. I backed away for many reasons, and one was that I didn't want to be the figurehead. It was really frustrating that I would be the poster child when I wasn't even involved anymore. Other people were organizing and doing all this stuff, and watching me be the picture in the magazine next to the words *riot grrrl*. Also, making music was a full-time job, and riot grrrl was a full-time job, and I had to decide which full-time job I was going to take. I chose the band, and I think that was ultimately the best decision.

Have you been working on music projects?
Yeah, I've been playing music with some friends. I don't know what will happen to it, but it's fun. I don't want to be in a big band again, because I just want to be in one place. I want to be home.

Have you been writing?
It started as blurbs. Everybody wanted me to blurb their books. And then I got asked to do some prefaces and introductions. I've been writing for an Internet site under another name. It's not about music, and I wanted to get confident. It was really successful, and I was really proud of it. I wrote two essays.

What were they about?
I don't want to talk about it. It's been great because I've been getting confidence again as a writer. I haven't had time to write for so long because being in a band was 24/7. Yeah, I want to write. I just have to practice every day and get good at it again. I did the introduction to the Joan Jett book. It's just a page, but it was super fun. I am writing an introduction for my friend, an artist, for their catalog, and I was getting all stressed out, thinking, "I have to get other catalogs and see what people write." But then I realized they didn't want me to write as an art historian. They wanted me to write as myself.

Would you write your memoirs?
I thought about it. I'm not ready yet. I have to make some new work and figure out what the direction of that new work is going to be, because I want to write through the prism of a new project. I don't want to write it through the prism of nostalgia. I want to write through the prism of looking forward.

END.

***Christina Kelly** is a blogger and journalist best known for her editorial role at Sassy, the legendary '90s teen magazine that introduced a generation of girls to 'zine culture, underground music, activism and self-empowerment in an era when all other teen magazines still focused exclusively on boys, prom dresses and diet tips. "For those of us who grew up in the years just before the Internet," writes Marisa Melzer, co-author of* How Sassy Changed My Life, *"it was a cultural barometer, dispenser of sisterly wisdom, and refuge for any of us who ever felt like we didn't quite live up to the all-American ideal. Christina Kelly was the instigator of much of this and author of some of the most deadpan, memorable articles to come from any publication in the nineties."*

Kathleen Hanna is currently recording an album with her new five-piece band, The Julie Ruin. She is also the subject of an upcoming documentary titled *The Kathleen Hanna Project, a.k.a Who Told You Christmas Wasn't Cool?*, directed by Sini Anderson.

JULIA LEPETIT [TITLE GRAPHIC] is a New York-based artist trained in illustration and graphic design. Inspired by art ranging from the early 1900's to the 1950's, she is constantly working towards improving her craft. She has been published in a number of magazines and websites.

AN OPEN INTERGALACTIC LETTER TO

"HE CAME FROM OUTER SPACE TO SAVE THE HUMAN RACE"

KLAUS NOMI

DEAR KLAUS NOMI,

We've never met, and your ashes have long since been scattered above Manhattan, so I guess it's pretty weird for me to be writing you this letter. Then again, everyone always says you seemed to hail from another planet. Let's pretend for a moment that you didn't die alone in a hospital bed in 1983. It's comforting to imagine that you simply returned to your home world and maybe, somehow, you can read this.

If you were still here on earth, you'd have turned sixty-seven last winter. There would have been birthday celebrations, no doubt: your friends gathered around you at the piano to sing Kurt Weill and Chubby Checkers tunes. Perhaps you'd share some of your famous homemade lime tarts with them and spend hours reminiscing about those hazy post-punk days in NYC.

I wish I could fold time and space to sit in the balcony at Irving Plaza the night your brief, bright star ascended during a four-night run of The New Wave Vaudeville Show, directed by Ann Magnuson. It was 1978. (Up until around that time, your name was still Klaus Sperber, and you'd been supporting yourself primarily as pastry chef for well-to-do Hamptons types.) They say that you emerged from the smoke machine vapors like a visitor from a distant world, stiff and somber in a clear vinyl cape. My friend and former bandleader, musician Jim Sclavunos, was there in the balcony, manning the spotlight. He once told me that when you opened your Clara Bow mouth and sang the mezzo-soprano aria "Mon cœur s'ouvre à ta voix" from Camille Saint-Saëns' opera *Samson et Dalila*, no one could believe it was really you. David McDermott, the emcee, had to keep assuring the audience that you were not lip-synching.

The elasticity and strength of your voice was remarkable: when singing pop tunes, you'd deliver verses in a reedy tenor and then leap two octaves up to hit high, strong falsetto notes on the chorus. Countertenors may be in vogue these days, but back then, the kids had never heard anything like it … and their hearts opened to your voice.

Certainly, nobody had ever *seen* anything like you before: that angular, androgynous pixie face framed by a heavily lacquered, Kewpie doll widow's peak, exclamatory plucked eyebrows, monochromatic kabuki makeup always immaculately applied whether you were onstage or going 'round the corner for a carton of milk. The sculptural costumes and sets that you and your friends concocted borrowed as much from *Das Kabinett des Doktor Caligari* as from *The Day The Earth Stood Still*.

You were unabashedly dramatic onstage, gentle and soft-spoken in person. The shtick could be co(s)mically absurd, yet your guileless approach was deeply moving; it touched people.

AS YOUR FRIEND AND COLLABORATOR WAS QUOTED ON AN NOMI FAN WEBSITE:

KRISTIAN HOFFMAN

His vision was naive, quaint, almost foolish, but forceful in its purity and innocence. Even at his most wildly ridiculous ("Lightning Strikes") or quaveringly sublime ("Death"), there was an acknowledgment of impending apocalypse that lent [him] conviction. For Klaus, apocalypse was metaphor for purification, and as the oddball optimist surrounded by cynical detachment and resignation, he dared to believe in a better world.

In that febrile, pre-MTV magic hour, you enjoyed a manic cult following, both in New York and overseas in France. Hoffman signed on as one of your key songwriters and managers. You gathered a revolving-door "Nomi family" of fellow misfits around you, including, at various times, performer John Sex, artists Kenny Scharf and Keith Haring and Jean-Michel Basquiat … even, according to legend, a young backup dancer named Madonna Louise Ciccone. David Bowie found out you had mutual friends from Berlin and asked you and your closest comrade-in-arms, Joey Arias, to perform with him on SNL.

You signed a record deal, cut two eclectic albums of pop and opera songs, made several ridiculously charming/charmingly ridiculous music videos, appeared in the film *Urgh! A Music War*, and toured Europe. Things were far from perfect, of course– as your fame grew, there were falling-outs with several old friends who'd helped you along the way, bitter creative disputes, and in spite of your increasing notoriety, you were barely able to make rent from month to month. Nevertheless, you seemed poised to take over the world.

HORMAZD NARIELWALLA [NOMI FIGURES] is an artist, researcher and writer based in London, UK. His work articulates tailoring archive as art. He is currently artist in residence with military tailors Dege & Skinner, Savile Row. Narielwalla is also the recipient of the prestigious International Rector Scholarship, and is currently studying for a PhD in military tailoring at Art at London College of Fashion.

Then, quite suddenly, your career ended. You'd grown frighteningly thin almost overnight, complaining of exhaustion, depression, recurring flu. One morning in early 1983, you collapsed and were rushed to the hospital. Your immune system was shot. Doctors would soon find a rare form of skin cancer breaking out all over your body. The condition was not yet known as AIDS.

From that time onward, you sat quietly in your lower Manhattan apartment, perusing videos and photos of yourself. "Look at this; this is what I did," you said to Joey Arias, who later related the story to *Attitude Magazine*. "Now it's all gone." Medication could not heal you. Homeopathic remedies didn't help. That summer, you returned to the hospital to receive twenty-four-hour care. You were one of the first celebrities to succumb to the 21st Century plague. So little was known about the disease at the time; most your friends were too afraid to come and visit you. They feared the so-called "gay cancer" might be contagious.

I hope there was someone at your bedside in the early morning hours of August 6, 1983, at the Sloan Kettering Hospital Center in midtown NYC. It fills me with a frantic kind of sadness to think that you were completely alone when you died.

Knowing the circumstances of your passing, it's difficult to listen to your rendition of Purcell's "Cold Song," and even more heartrending to watch film footage of your live Munich performance of the piece in late 1982, accompanied by a full orchestra. Dressed in a scarlet Shakespearian doublet with a starched white ruff, you carefully, slowly climbed a short set of stairs to the grandest stage of your career. So frail and so austere, you found your place, gathered your strength, and sang. At times, it's hard to tell if you're struggling with breath control or merely playing your role as the doomed, panting King Arthur to the hilt. In any case, you gave it your all, belting out "I can scarcely move or draw my breath. Let me, let me, let me freeze again to death!" This was one of the most stirring performances you ever gave. A few months later, you were gone.

I miss you, Klaus Nomi. Isn't that strange? I never knew you. I was barely sentient when you left this plane of existence. But from the moment I discovered a copy of your *Simple Man* LP in a dusty bin of used vinyl at Lou's Records many years ago and played "After the Fall," I have adored you for being brilliant and funny and true and tender-hearted and just ... so genuinely, unapologetically *you*. You once said:

"The way I look is part of it. It sounds affected but I do see myself as a piece of living art. People do accuse me of being just decorative or an escapist. Well, I *am*. That's what I do. So long as they realize that I am other things as well. I do kind of transcend the song and give it a different meaning. But satire

Well I told you about the total eclipse now
but still it caught you unaware
But I'm telling you hold on, hold on
Tomorrow we'll be there
And even though you went to church upon Sunday
you thought you didn't even have a prayer
But I'm telling you hold on, hold on
Tomorrow we'll be there

After the fall we'll be born, born, born again
after it all blows away
after the fall, after the fall
after it all blows away

We'll take a million years of civilization
We're gonna give it the electric chair
But I'm telling you hold on, hold on
Tomorrow we'll be there

I see a hundred million lonely mutants
they are glowing in their dark despair
But I'm telling you hold on, hold on
Tomorrow we'll be there

Well the freak shall inherit the earth now
No matter how well done or rare
But I'm telling you hold on, hold on
Tomorrow we'll be there

We'll build our radioactive castles
out in the radioactive air
And I'm telling you hold on, hold on
Tomorrow we'll be there

would be too simple. There are moments in my show which are very moving as well as amusing. People should allow me to be many things, really give me room to put things in another dimension."

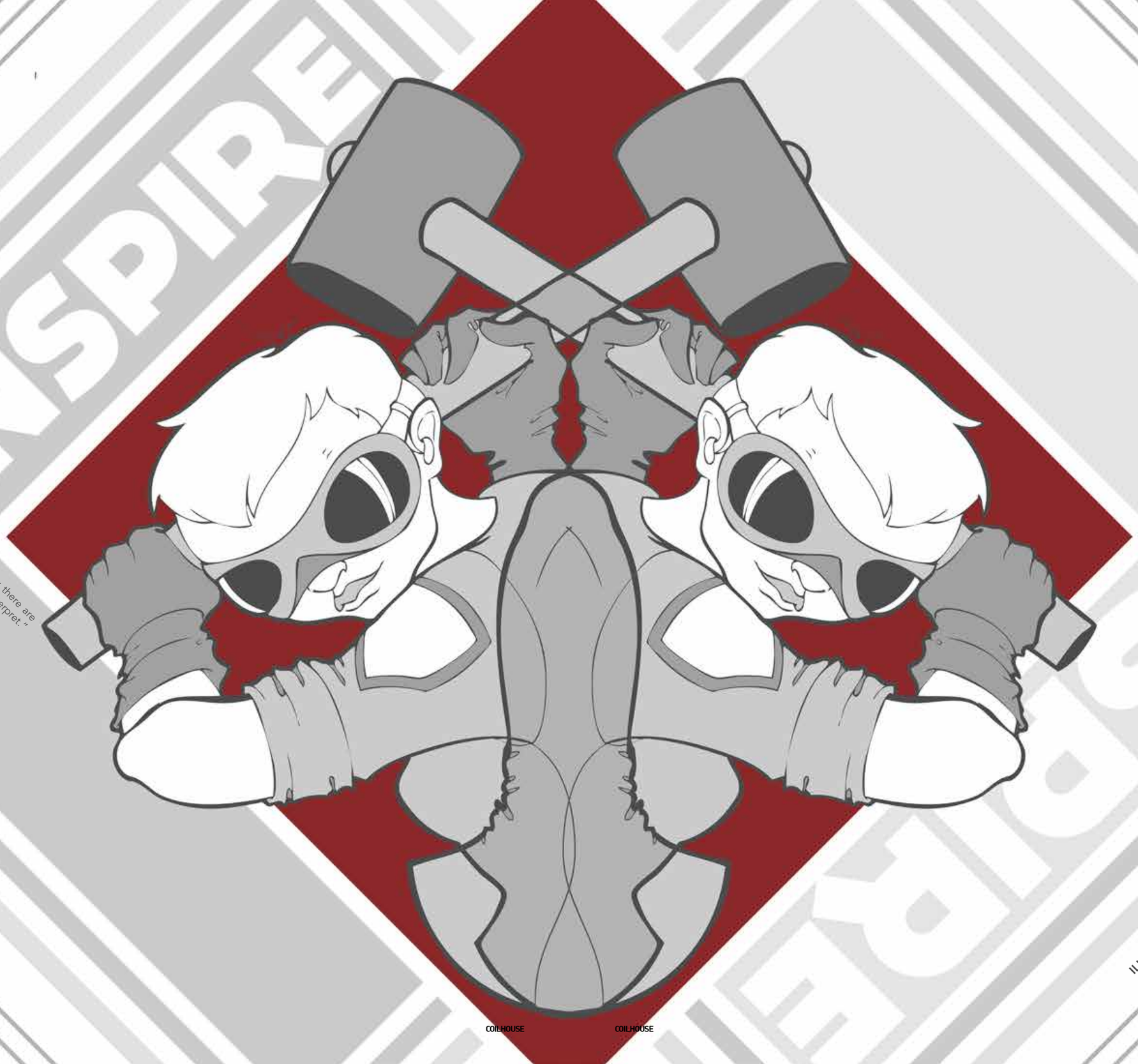
You're my hero. I wish you were still here so I could throw huge bouquets of hothouse blackberry lilies at your feet during your third encore at Carnegie Hall, or amuse you with "here comes the spaceship" theremin noises, or maybe just track down a more reliable address to send this letter to. I wish that talent as unique, talented, joyful, sincere and unclassifiable as yours was not consistently undervalued, and did not so often go unsung. I take comfort in knowing that, at this very moment, there are countless other lonely mutants out there, each of them braving this planet with their own individual modes of radical sincerity, wishing on stars like you … and that even if you can't read this letter, some of them will.

THANK YOU, KLAUS NOMI. MUCH LOVE.

MER

Be sure to watch filmmaker Andrew Horn's phenomenal 2004 documentary *The Nomi Song* to learn more about Klaus Nomi and the vibrant community of artists, performers, and friends who lived to tell his tale.

thenomisong.com / kristianhoffman.com / joeyarias.com / granscena.org / woodworksart.com / michaelhalsband.com / aids.org / actupny.org /



"There is nothing new under the sun; there are only infinite chances to rediscover and interpret."

RACHEL BRICE
PAGE 64

ILLUSTRATION Zoetica Ebb

PRIMARY CONSTRUCTS

TRUCTS

PHOTOGRAPHY BY HELEN WHITE
INTRODUCTION BY ZOETICA ERB

Piet Mondrian, Wassily Kandinsky, El Lissitzky: three artists who shaped the art world of the 1920s and '30s. With a style that exalted geometry and venerated structure, they were at the forefront of the Constructivist, Suprematist, De Stijl, and Bauhaus movements. In this tribute editorial, Australian photographer Helen White worked with industrial music duo Angelspit's Amelia Arsenic and ZooG to create a microcosm bursting with exuberant primary colors and bold shapes. What began as a one-off promotional shoot for Angelspit developed into a narrative wherein fearless latex and origami super-heroines defend their paper universe, ready to take on any challenge that comes into view.

CONSTRUCTIVIST PHOTO SHOOT
Art direction & photography: Helen White
Styling & costume design: Amelia Arsenic
Makeup: Karen Hopwood
Hair: Lyndall Vile and Lynn Nguyen,
Models: Annabella Barber at Priscillas (AUS), Caitlin Lomax at Red11 (NZ)
Assistance: Thomas Marcusson and Stephanie Rajalingam

ANGELSPIT'S LARVA PUPA TANK COFFIN PHOTO SHOOT
Art direction & styling: Amelia Arsenic and ZooG
Photography: Helen White
Makeup: Karen Hopwood
Hair: Lyndall Vile and Lynn Nguyen
Model: Amelia Arsenic
Assistance: Thomas Marcusson, Stephanie Rajalingam, Clare Beaton, Garrick Charter, Studio Kite, Brad Wylie

interview by ales kot

PAUL POPE

REINVENTING THE WHEEL

Paul Pope's eyes shine like a child's. He is spontaneous, then guarded, then enthusiastic, constantly switching his modus operandi. Perhaps that's how he's always been – from his boyhood in rural Ohio to his stints in various mega-cities of Europe, Asia, and North America – breaking stale patterns with the confident grin of an uncompromising artist.

Growing up in Bowling Green, Paul Pope discovered *Heavy Metal* magazine, Jack Kirby, The Birthday Party, Joy Division, Bauhaus, foreign films, fashion, and girls. Electrified, he took his first steps on a lifelong journey into an internal realm occupied by brave exhibitions and unknown pleasures. The landscape in his mind's eye flickered alternately black and white, and then Technicolor. Teeming and then empty. Familiar yet alien. He envisioned eclectic scenes that were urgent and endearing in turns; he saw a page that was blank yet always vibrantly alive, with elegant brushstrokes emerging and disappearing.

Paul Pope decided to become a comics creator.

His speculative fiction graphic novel *100%*, quickly became known as a modern masterwork. He reinvented the Batman mythos with a fierce critique of dystopian society in *Batman: Year 100*. He has collaborated with the fashion brands Diesel and DKNY. His sporadically released sci-fi adventure epic, *THB*, first published in 1995, continues to evolve and to astound. The 2007 *PULPHOPE* retrospective monograph covers every aspect of his work so far: intriguing women, strange machines, enigmatic castaways, and sprawling metropolitan vistas merge into a mystifying art colossus.

This romance with fantastical mega-cities spans Paul Pope's entire career. It may very well be that a universe has been expanding within his soul ever since he first discovered it there all those years ago. Now the lives of his characters are the cellular movements hidden deep within the structure of his brush, the flickering life that gleams like bright orange lampposts on a winter night in New York City. And as Pope sits, discussing art, music, empathy, and dreams, the voice of one of his heroes, John Lennon, seems to echo all around him.

In Paul Pope's eyes, we all shine on.

"IN MY MIND comic books are the perfect POP SONGS."

The city echoes through your work – why? What does New York mean to you?
New York is a petri dish that gives you a chance to redefine yourself. When I came here, I wanted to redefine myself. So I had the same feeling; in fact I thought the city looked like an onion, it opened like a flower, it blossomed. I first came to New York in 1977, but I think the first time I really grasped the view of the city was riding back on the B train from Brooklyn on the south side and seeing the city on the overpass, going over the bridge - from the Manhattan bridge.

How long ago was that?
Thirteen years.

Did you accomplish what you wanted to accomplish when you came here?
No.

Do you feel like you're still on the way?
I do. The curveball is what the digital world presents to what's essentially the life of a monk. It slows it down, at least sometimes. Being a cartoonist is a pretty solitary life. It's very difficult to maintain the monkhood alongside the need to live with constant access to the Internet. You're always available. I work with people in Australia, in Europe, Los Angeles, Brazil. I have to be able to turn the machine off to get anything done, but then I have to turn the machine on to sort of process the work that I do. It's a little stressful.

What's your dream right now?
I really admire the great jazz players. I spend a lot of time thinking about Miles Davis. I want to find a way to incorporate jazz theory into my comics, to be flexible and intuitive on a level that we really haven't seen yet. Creating a body of work in terms of albums. That's what I want. I get a lot of inspiration from studying biographies of artists outside of comics. I like looking at the range of what the great jazz musicians and the great painters attempted.

You've said that good comics make you hear the music, and good music makes you see the images. What would a comic book that sounds and feels like jazz look like?
It would have to be a story, or a setting, that would be kind of formalist in the beginning, a story that wouldn't have a specific color. You would be able to understand the shape of it through improvisation. It's a very abstract way of saying it, but the thing that I find amazing is that if you think about a lot of the great players and read the stories of great albums, a lot of times the takes were really short. Two or three takes, and great albums were recorded in five days. You don't need a lot of time. This is the way guys like Jack Kirby would have worked. I see abstract shapes in my mind, I take those and think about them, then come up with dynamic ideas... I take a thread and blow it up and make it into a shape and take it back down into a thread again.

How does a comic book that sounds like dubstep look in your mind's eye?
It would be rhythmic and repetitive, it would define the theme and it would repeat it, slowly develop it ... it would have a basic message that would be clear, and then it would find ways to build some extra colors on the sides. That's where I see dubstep.

Where does your fascination with the carnival atmosphere, "freaks", and unconventional nomadic tribes come from?
I like colorful, unique people. I have sympathy for outsiders and unconventional people, they have a certain dignity if they can overcome the things in their way. I admire people who live in such a way that they are living honestly and also living against the grain. I find conformism embarrassing and distasteful and I try to steer away from it while also keeping a sense of civics, of politeness or consideration, in mind. A gentleman nonconformist.

Your lady, Harvest Moon, is an extraordinarily talented trapeze artist - that seems to feed back to your fascination with the non-conformism of weird and beautiful.
It's true. Not only because she's an exceptional artist but because the type of creative work she does is really different from mine. It's kinetic and physical — and public — it's almost the opposite of what I do, where there's no "performance" really, just a guy sitting in a room thinking and drawing lines on paper. It's somehow enriching to consider another art form and have that in a partner, it's a way to bring new ideas into your own work. I think it'd be hard to be involved with another cartoonist. I fear it'd be like an echo chamber.

What was your first love?
Well, I mean outside of Mom and my first cat, I guess it was probably – are we talking about a person or are we talking about a thing?

Let's talk about both.
Okay. The thing? The flat image, without a doubt. I was about six to seven, and it was such an amazing time – I discovered Escher, Kirby, Steranko, you know, Toulouse-Lautrec, Picasso, Spielberg, Leone, without even understanding what the stuff was. I was just absorbing it.

By feeling it.
By feeling it in a safe environment, at home. Then I kind of fell for a girl when I was about 21, so I was a bit of a late bloomer. It was nice, we had a little relationship for about a year or so. She wasn't much of a comics fan, but she did encourage me to draw with a brush, and I will never forget that.

Love. Empathy. Ursula Le Guin is another big love of yours, right? Why do you love her work?
Because of the empathy! There were two major influences that hit me before I started working on *100%* that played into the book - *The Man in the High Castle* by Philip K. Dick and *The Orsinian Tales* by Ursula Le Guin.

In her case, she wrote stories that were very human, very relatable – but they were set in really strange, new environments. I wanted to see a story that took place in a believable world that was very different from ours. I do take science fiction history very seriously, so I wanted to apply a bit of that to comic books and not think about John Byrne and Jack Kirby so much as about Asimov and Orwell.

When did you start reading Ursula Le Guin and Philip K. Dick?
I got into both of them in my mid-20's.

Do you feel like there might be a connection between you entering a completely new world that was so different and the books you were finding/were finding you at the time?
Yeah. During college, I got deeply interested in the French 18th century, everything from the Revolution through the Enlightenment, Rousseau through Diderot, Maeterlinck through Voltaire. And then I got into American 20th century stuff, Hemingway, Steinbeck, and it was amazing, too. And then I moved towards New York and started rediscovering literary science fiction. I was growing up, and I feel like love and loss is probably the best theme to work with at that point, at least if you want to create a story with any force. There's other ones, but you might want to wait awhile, live awhile, before you write about them.

So you began with the themes you knew something about, while continually enhancing yourself...
Yeah.

...which brings us to lucid dreaming. Such an amazing way to see inside oneself. How did that begin?
It started in therapy. I almost got married. I was living with a lady, and it wasn't working, it was tragic, but it also was like stepping on a landmine and it just brought up all this pre-adolescent shit that was buried for years, decades even. I started reading Jung. Thanks to Joseph Campbell, I've discovered dream interpretation, and I have always admired Rick Veitch's stuff, especially *Rare Bit Fiends*, and then there's *Little Nemo* by Winsor McCay. I started noticing that my subconscious was trying to tell me something. I began paying attention.

How long did it take before you began to feel that something got better because of it?
Three to four years. I started to respect the fact that the ideas I am obsessive about are the ones I should make art about, and I noticed that a lot of times my obsessive image thoughts are dream thoughts. So I had one about the word "curious" on a wall, scribbled in chalk – and I put my hand over the word "curious" and it became "curio". I felt like that meant something, like there were things to be uncovered. Then I made it as a comic about the dream, just to exercise it and then I made a few more. They seemed fresh and strange. Later, when I was in Paris for some meetings, I was inadvertently showing it to one of my editors at Dargaud, and he liked it. I showed him some of the others, and he said let's publish it. That became the genesis for *Psychenaut. Psychenaut* is a book about dreams—lucid dreaming, unconscious dream imagery, Carl Jung. At the time, it was just therapy. Though, as Nietzsche said: "*When casting out your devils, make sure not to cast out the best part of you.*"

How's the comic about your experiences with lucid dreaming coming together?
Slowly, but we're wrapping it up. I hope to get it to Dargaud in the first quarter of 2011. I've had to put everything on hold in order to get *Battling Boy* done first, it's priority. The major difference I find between American and European publishers is that in Europe they tend to see the cartoonist as an auteur, whereas in the States he's a guy producing a product. And so the Europeans are bafflingly benevolent when it comes to finishing a project, because if they believe in you, they want you to do your best work. My editor at First Second, Mark Siegel, is part French and he functions more like a European editor, I find. There's not that many auteurs in the States – we have Jim Woodring, Jeff Smith, Frank Miller, there are others I could list, but a lot of times comics in the US are seen as commodities. Case in point: San Diego Comic-Con.

It's a Movie-Con.
Yeah, it's a Movie-Con.

How do we change that?
When a stock gets too large, it splits. I think that Comic-Con has gotten large enough so that it can split into two Cons. I think that it should, I think it will, and we'll probably have a Media-Con and then we'll have some sort of a Comic-Con; that's my most benevolent hope for Comic-Con. I think the Media-Con should go to Vegas, because Vegas can handle it. The San Diego Comic-Con should be mainly about comic books. Promoting films based on comics is perfectly fine, but apart from that? I'd rather see Lollapalooza team up with comics books. That would be cool!

"WHEN I look at a blank page I DON'T FEEL AFRAID, I feel excited and I feel like I can just JUMP INTO IT."

Who are the comics artists who will shape the face of comics in the next years?
First of all, the French are really powerful, their cartooning ability and their legacy are astonishing. Then... Rafael Grampa is great. I love Jim Woodring. Frank Miller is always going to surprise people. Moebius has more inside of him. Sean Murphy is great, I believe in him. His art reminds me of Alex Toth's art, sometimes. I like Corey Lewis and Brandon Graham, they're both doing interesting stuff. Dash Shaw has a lot of ideas and a lot of power, he's going to do some great work. Sam Hiti is amazing. His new graphic novel, *Death Day*, is out now. He's great, he has a very forceful art style, and his stuff sounds the way it looks. Another type of jazz. As I already mentioned, my new icon is Miles Davis. There's a theory to jazz, and that's extremely exciting. I'm interested in applying an idea to the page and making it permanent. That's what I want to do. I want to bring a lot of new stuff into comics, let other influences get into comics. Comics has to be a mutant art form.

What would be the album you'd recommend to someone who never listened to Miles Davis?
I'd recommend *Kind of Blue. Kind of Blue* was my gateway jazz album and I was turned on to it 1989. I was a kid in college and my mom was dating a dude who was a economics professor at Buckingham University. He also taught at the London School of Economics. We had these little group meetings at the house, all these professors who were friends of my mom's boyfriend, and I was just a kid, you know, but there was one dude there who was a jazz player and he told me "*I can tell you're a musician, so let me turn you on to some jazz*" and he gave me *Kind of Blue* and a Gil Evans album, *Out of the Cool.* And I can't say they changed my life enough; they really did so. I trust music.

What was the last great act or the last great album that you heard?
I love Spiritualized, I think they are amazing, they've got jazz structure within rock format. I respect dynamics, in film, in comics, in music. I like someone who can create a mood, a modality, and then make a tempo within and a sound within that. I'm into the Japanese band Ghost, they have a sort of exciting psychedelic drone. I love the Black Angels and Thee Hypnotics. In my mind, comic books are the perfect pop songs, 22 to 32 pages. A comic book is like a pop single. Albums would be graphic novels or trade paperbacks.

Real ones. Real graphic novels. There should be more graphic novels somewhere in the range of 300-700 pages, big, sprawling stories like *From Hell, Duncan the Wonder Dog* and *Body-World,* not 20 pages of a superhero putting his cape on (even though there are a few interesting stories in that). But what you see the most in current mainstream comics are large widescreen panels where almost nothing happens – not because the creators want to embrace the moment and fill it with wonderful possibilities, but because they're lazy. It's the manga influence gone wrong.
True. I feel almost jingoistic in a Japanese sense when it comes to manga, because I trained and worked over there. I had a Japanese paycheck and paid Japanese taxes. You really have to understand Japanese culture and understand the Japanese perspective on manga or what we would call comics to get what they they do. It's one thing to be into the really sweet lines that they draw, the big eyeballs, the cool technology they draw, the robots, but a deeper sense of understanding... I found it to be such a mystery. It was a big labyrinth, even after having worked there for 5 years. Seeing people who say that they understand manga without working in Japan... some of us think that we are making manga, but we are not.

American manga doesn't exist.
There is no American Manga. Manga is Japanese, maybe South Korean, maybe southern Chinese, by association - it's cultural. You might have seen that Warren Ellis and I got into this online. I think we need a new term, because I've seen a bunch of stuff that people call American Manga, and I've really been into some of it, but it's not Manga. It's something else. It's a weird hybrid of American and Japanese comics. I make a hybrid of Japanese and American comics. It isn't Manga, because I'm not Japanese.

Yes, and you're not just a hybrid of American and Japanese comics, there's a pretty large European influence as well.
Absolutely. My first loves were probably Jack Kirby and Gil Kane, Steranko and then Moebius, Hugo Pratt, the whole *Heavy Metal* clique. Guido Crepax. Frank Miller, also — Frank deserves a lot of credit along with the people who published First Comics in the '80s because they did a lot. They introduced *Lone Wolf and Cub.* That was a big deal. Frank had a voice, and him doing the covers introduced Japanese comics to people of my generation. I was a teenager in the '80s. Japanese comics were difficult to find, expensive and kind of slow, but because Frank put his name on it, things changed. Then Akira was translated into English...

What about Liberatore's and Tamburini's *Ranx*? That's some brilliant comics making as well.
Yeah! And I don't understand why it's not a film yet. If they told me Tarantino is going to film *Ranx* tomorrow, I would do a backflip. I would be so excited.

Speaking of Tarantino, he seems to love *Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid,* which is one of your favorite movies, right?
Pat Garrett and *Billy the Kid* has a real human problem in it. Two old friends. The older guy tells the younger guy, "I'm going to kill you if you don't get out of here, so now's your chance, leave" and he won't leave, realizing he's building his legend. He's willing to be a martyr. The older guy is forced into a very uncomfortable situation – he's the lawman. It's a great story because the theme is laid out in the first ten minutes, and then everything collides. I appreciate when a cartoonist or a collaborative team in comics have a theme – there's no harmony without a theme, there's no structure.

THESE PAGES FEATURE SEVERAL RARELY SEEN EXAMPLES OF POPE'S VARIOUS CONCEPT AND SKETCHBOOK PIECES, COMMERCIAL WORK, AND POSTER IMAGES, AS WELL AS PUBLISHED WORK FROM *100%*, *BATTLING BOY*, *THB*, *DCS STRANGE ADVENTURES*, *PYSCHENAULT*, AND *PULPHOPE*, THE ART OF PAUL POPE.

Do you always have a theme before you start to make the pages?
Yes. I am a little more formalist in this sense. If I've got the tools to tell a story, I want to make a point. You can make comics for their own sake, but even — I know Chris Ware hates hearing this – but he's a formalist. I don't have much interest in comics that have no point, that are just pretty drawings. I can go look at fucking Andrew Wyeth if I want to go look at nice drawings. Make me feel something.

It's all about creating a feeling.
Yeah, and then put a stamp on it. Love, freedom, family, animals, whatever it might be, to be able to put a face on that or a sound on it, or an image on it, to me that's winning in art. That's what John Lennon did, that's what the Beatles did. They wrote the song where they say that all you need is love. To me, that's the greatest statement.

Would you be interested in making John Lennon's biography with, let's say, Grant Morrison, who loves John Lennon quite a bit?
No – I think it would be too complicated. I'd do a bio-comic about Salvador Dali, though. I've actually looked into it.

What do you think should happen in the next 5 to 10 years if we want to change the landscape of comics to something better?
We have to figure out this digital and web comics thing. We need to make a format that's functional and viable and we have to come to some sort of a divorce agreement with Hollywood where we'll be able to make movies but won't depend on them. This brings the publishers in - the publishers ought to encourage the talent to create new things. I know that it sounds kind of annoying coming from a guy that did a big Batman book. It's one thing to work on a franchise, but it's important to create a new Batman. We need new ideas in comics. And I'd like to see some more great print publications, more good looking unique books. I'm not too into reading comics online, I prefer paper. I don't think anybody could have anticipated the changes that are coming now. Within five years it is going to look like totally different landscape.

I'm in sort of a strange position because I've got two or three big projects on the table and I want to finish them before starting new things. I'm not going to be able to get my head out of the sand in terms of new stuff — in any major way – for two, three years.

Are you happy with the way things are going?
Yes. I have moments of pure joy with my artistic output. When I look at a blank page, I don't feel afraid - I feel excited, and I feel like I can just jump into it.

What's *Battling Boy* about and what's its status?
Battling Boy is the son of a god, or superhero (I don't specify), whose father sends him down from the top of a mountain to rid a big city from its plague of monsters. Hercules had his labors, Batman has his Gotham, Battling Boy has his Monstropolis. These monsters are horrible, awful things a-la Grimm's Fairy Tales. Beowulf-ish beasts! And Battling Boy protects children from them.

One of my favorite manga is Egawa Tatsuya's *Tokyo University Story*–he has long sequences where basically nothing happens except a guy riding a bicycle across multiple pages, or two guys playing ping-pong for 15 pages. I love that, not because it's indulgent, but because it feels real, like that fugue state you get into when doing something intensely, [like] playing chess, or even drawing. So in *Battling Boy*, I have these enormous fight scenes, more than 20 pages.

With any luck this thing's going to be huge. I have a couple of months left on the art for the first of two books. There's a film deal with Paramount, which is moving along on its own steam, can't say too much about it, though.

How huge?
Let's say *Batman Year 100* and my art book *Pulphope* were hits. And now, people are waiting for the next hit, they want it to top the last ones. So there's pressure to outdo your past work and not repeat yourself again. With *Battling Boy*, I stepped back, I found a different set of labels, First Second in the US and Dargaud in France, and I brought a project that's pretty big, it's a big story. I think this might be, in terms of music – this might sound totally douchebaggy, but this is like four albums, this isn't just one book, it's split into two books – I want to let *Battling Boy* be like a symphony, like an opera. Bernard Herrmann. Ennio Morricone. I do see comics as pop, I see film as pop. Every once in a while something is elevated to the level of art and pop can be art.

The best pop is art.
Absolutely. What's really important is being able to speak in the universal language to the widest possible audience. In order to do that, you have to be able to speak honestly, in a very direct way, just like Hendrix and the Beatles did. They had an ability to work within their art form without feeling cynical or commercial about it - they *wanted* to reinvent the wheel.

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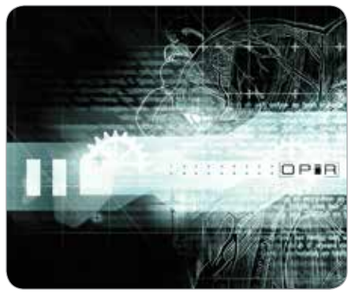

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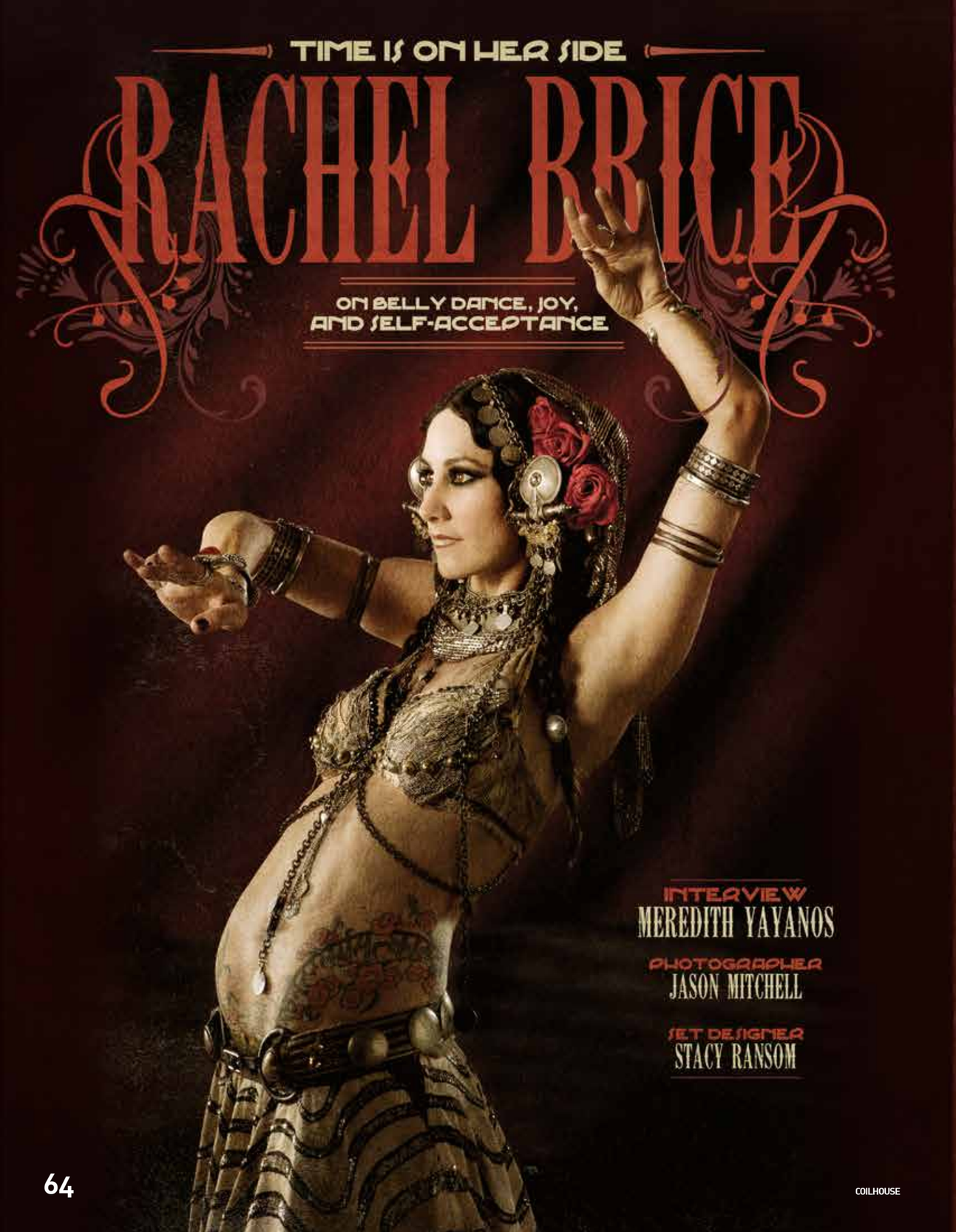
TIME IS ON HER SIDE

RACHEL BRICE

ON BELLY DANCE, JOY, AND SELF-ACCEPTANCE



INTERVIEW
MEREDITH YAYANOS

PHOTOGRAPHER
JASON MITCHELL

SET DESIGNER
STACY RANSOM

IT'S A DAMP, GREEN EVENING IN PORTLAND, OREGON.

RACHEL BRICE seems very glad to be home for a spell. Although she's one of the most accomplished and well-traveled performers in her field, Brice describes herself simply: "I belly dance. I collect old junk. I am in love." As she sits on an old settee, pouring tea by low lamplight in the house she shares with her partner, Sol Crawford, all of these truths are evident. Brice radiates the composure of someone who has spent decades honing the dovetailing crafts of yoga and dance. Much like the ornate handmade costumes she performs in, Brice's antique-filled parlor is ageless, elegant, thoughtful, playful – a reflection of her personality and her beau's. (Whenever she speaks of him, Brice glows far more brightly than the lantern beside her.)

THEY CALL HER THE SNAKE CHARMER.

World-renowned for her innovations in a dance form called Tribal Fusion, Brice has mastered serpentine arm work, gravity-defying backbends, and astounding abdominal muscle control – all markers of the indomitable substance beneath her aesthetic. During quieter numbers, she will often fall into a long, impossibly drawn-out series of isolations and undulations. Something shifts; she blisses out and melts into a slow motion reverie, bringing her audience with her. It's uncanny – almost as if, somehow, she has stilled the clock.

As the rain patters on her rooftop, Brice, who has begun to contemplate turning forty, breathes calmly, and smiles often.

SHE IS NOT AFRAID OF THE PASSAGE OF TIME.

You recently moved to Portland after living in San Francisco for many, many years. How has the transition been?
It's gorgeous here. It rains all the time. There seem to be more trees per capita here than any other city, and more restaurants that have local, fresh, organic, sustainable food than just about anywhere else on the planet. There are incredible food carts everywhere. I'm new to town and generalizing, but it really seems like a lot of the lifestyle choices people make are inspired by that saying, "Necessity is the mother of invention." No one that I know around here is very wealthy, and that's created this beautiful, homespun environment. It's amazing how much stuff people here make themselves. Anytime someone comes over to our house, they bring us something they pickled, or grew, or sewed, or a hand-dipped candle.

There seems to be a smidge more hope for the human race here than in many cities. Or maybe more of a sense of accountability. Has resettling changed your lifestyle at all?
Honestly, I still don't think the human race is going to make it, but I know that doesn't relieve me of personal responsibility. I once believed that, in the eleventh hour, we'd wake up and make changes. Well, now we're in the eleventh hour, and we are not doing it. So, I vacillate. Sometimes I'm resolved to live responsibly and get off the grid, and grow my own food and use solar energy. Other times I think, "Fuck it. I'm going to eat meat and fly around the world and drink Starbucks." I'm an extremist, I guess. On the responsible end, Portland allows you the option to have your house run entirely on renewable energy. So this house, and the light that we're sitting by, is all wind-powered. That's a lovely feeling. And for years now, I've been using car-shares and public transportation almost exclusively. Clothes-wise, the only things I buy new these days are hoodies and socks and underwear. With costuming, I really feel strongly about having everything be used. Everything I wear when I dance has been found at an antique fair, thrift store, or vintage emporium. Even the bra bases I use come from Goodwill, and I buy all of my thread at garage sales and the like.

In addition to the greenness and quality-of-life improvements, it seems like there's a little more breathing room in Portland for you, career-wise.
The Bay Area has a *long* history of belly dance with some major lineage holders. I'm a new kid on the block in that town, so I go there to study rather than teach. But now, in Portland, I think I'm bringing a little bit of Bay Area belly dance up north. Paulette Rees-Denis of Gypsy Caravan did this when she moved to the area from San Francisco as a member of Fat Chance Belly Dance. Now I get to do it with Tribal Fusion.

Who were/are some of your teachers?
For the past ten years or so, the main mentor has been Carolena Nericcio, the woman that created American Tribal Style in the early '90s with her troupe Fat Chance Belly Dance. Additionally, I've had a lot of instructors and peers that I've learned a great deal from. I would consider Mardi Love – my dance partner in The Indigo Belly Dance Company, and one of my closest friends – a teacher. Then there's Suhaila Salimpour, the daughter of Jamila Salimpour. There's Heather Stants of San Diego, who completely changed the face of American Tribal Style belly dance. And Jill Parker, who studied with Carolena Nericcio; she's the mother of Tribal Fusion, technically. She was the first one to be trained in ATS and then shift into fusing American Cabaret into it. I'm also currently inspired by Amy Sigil of Sacramento, who is creating community through hard work. She really understands the value of building self-esteem through shared achievement. Who else? Gah! Too many people to mention. I could go on and on and still leave out dozens of names.

So, for the unfamiliar, what is American Tribal Style (ATS) belly dance?
I should preface my answer by saying that this is just my personal understanding of the history of the dance form. I'm sure one person can't have all the facts! But ATS is a form of belly dance that evolved in the early '90s under the influence of my teacher, Carolena Nericcio. She, in turn, was influenced by the style of another teacher, Jamila Salimpour. Carolena took the movement vocabulary from Jamila, then created a structured improvisational form based on a specific vocabulary and corresponding series of cues. As far as I know, no one else had ever done that. There had been a lot of free-form improvisational belly dance, but not structured group improvisation, and that, to me, is what defines American Tribal Style.

There are Spanish elements as well, aren't there?
Flamenco: that very strong, distinct posture, as well as the arm movements. The flamenco roots give it a serious girl-power vibe. American Tribal posture and movement conveys a very clear nonverbal communication of "Don't fuck with us. We're incredibly strong and we're in control of our sensuality. We're not doing this for you; we're doing this for each other and for ourselves. But you may enjoy if you wish."

The costuming tends to reflect a lot of individuality and fierceness as well.
Yes. There's a huge emphasis on adornment, and costume, and presentation, and most of all, on *creativity.* Most tribal belly dancers make their own costumes. Carolena has always said, "You cannot buy your tribal costume in a box." You sew yourself into your costume. The music, too, was very different. Fat Chance Belly Dance was the first group that I knew of to start dancing to electronic music. Lots of ethnic electro fusion.

Now that we know a bit about ATS, can you tell us a bit about Tribal Fusion, the form you've played a pivotal role in developing?
Sure. Tribal Fusion used to mean that you had studied American Tribal Style and branched out from there, but since then it's become a *huge* umbrella. By definition, anything can become a part of Tribal Fusion. But let's start from the beginning. Around 2000, I first saw Jill Parker dance with Fat Chance. She had been a member of the group for many years. Jill was the inspiration for me pursuing a snakelike, muscular style – the first dancer I'd ever seen move like that. Watching her for the first time, it felt like I got punched in the gut and then in the face. *So* inspired. Everything changed. I became kind of obsessed with her; put pictures of her all over my room. *[laughs]* At first I was too shy to take classes, but finally did. She was transitioning out of American Tribal at that time. She had done it for almost ten years and wanted to try some different movement, break out of the structured improvs into something more theatrical, more tightly choreographed – a system that would allow her to work with fifty dancers at a time, creating these huge shapes on stage. She's like the Busby Berkeley of belly dance. She started culling from more vintage imagery, wanting to play with '20s and '30s costuming. I was briefly in her company, the now unfortunately defunct Ultra Gypsy.

What were some of the big differences between Fat Chance and Parker's own emerging style?
Jill Parker removed some of the key elements of the American Tribal costume, which was shocking to the community at first. She removed the choli and the head wrap and came out wearing a coin bra, with her hair down, and sporting armpit hair. She also started kind of pushing the envelope musically, getting really gothic and including thematic, theatrical presentations. Jill was heavily involved with Burning Man and The Crucible fire arts community in Oakland, and she started working with fire. No one else had done that before. For twenty or thirty years, belly dance had worked a lot with swords and snakes, but fire was new, as far as I know.

Were there other ATS performers branching out as well?
At the same time that Jill's new style was emerging, Heather Stants in San Diego (who was also inspired by Jill's work) started to pursue a similar path, removing the choli and head wrap. Heather brought this urban hip-hop element to it. Also, instead of sticking with one movement at a time, Heather started making these beautiful, undulating long phrases of movements that involved level changes and rigorous physicality. Blew my mind the first time I saw that. The aforementioned Mardi Love was down in San Diego at the time as well, working with Heather. Mardi, in my opinion, is the greatest costuming genius of belly dance since Jamila Salimpour. In a lot of ways, Mardi's responsible for the look of Tribal Fusion. Anything she does seems to become the new trend in the dance form. Some time later, Melodia of Urban Tribal came up with those big, flared pants, the ubiquitous bell bottoms you'll see everywhere. Almost everyone who has done tribal belly dance has owned at least one pair. She had these huge, wild dreads, as did most of the girls in Ultra Gypsy, which was a big departure. In many ways, Ultra Gypsy and Urban Tribal were sister troupes, doing totally different work in separate cities, but appealing to the same alternative pierced, tattooed, dreaded demographic.

Where do you fit into all of this history?
I came into that world as a student. I'd been dancing with live music, doing more traditional Upper Volta and Egyptian stuff, fusing American Tribal Style with the technique of Suhaila Salimpour as seen in *Suhaila Dances For The Sultan*. Oh, man… I watched that VHS tape over and over and over. Every time I would put Suhaila's tape in the player, no matter how many times I'd already watched it, my heart would start pounding. I was always so excited. Then, one fateful day, my friend Breanna Levine dropped an Amon Tobin CD on me. I got *really* into it, as well as Squarepusher, and just generally started working with more electronic stuff. I don't really know what was going on with me at the time. Suddenly things just started getting darker and darker and darker. I was looking angrier and angrier, wearing blacker and blacker costumes, dancing to glitchier and glitchier shit. I wasn't consciously trying to create something different. I'd just find a piece of music and think, "Hey, why not," or find a piece of costume and throw it into the mix. At the time, it was all *very* new. People were saying, "Well, that's not belly dance! That's not properly this, or that, or the other thing – "

The traditionalists felt threatened?
"Hey," I'd say, "call it toothpaste in your eye. I don't care! Give it whatever name you want." Around that time, Miles Copeland came into the picture. Miles is a businessman who used to manage the Go-Go's, The Police, and Sting, and all of these other huge '80s bands. Miles had recently realized, because of the digital music industry, the record was dead, and that he wasn't going to be able to buy any more castles. *[laughs]* I love Miles. He decided to assemble a crew and performers to create a large, live, expensive traveling belly dance show modeled after *Riverdance.* That show, which I was a part of, ended up becoming huge. He gave it this name that we don't need to mention necessarily…

What, Bellydance Superstars?
Noooo. Please don't make me say it. *[laughs]* Well, *ohhh*kay. First of all, I love the women in it. I love Miles and Steve-O, Miles's right-hand man in the business. Without a doubt, joining that production was a huge shift in my career. Of course, I didn't know that at the time. *None* of the dancers could have predicted how BDSS would affect our lives. Tribal Fusion didn't even have a *name* yet. Think about it: I'm dancing in a restaurant for twenty bucks on Tuesday nights, trying to get gigs – dancing for free almost everywhere. This guy comes along and asks, "You want to go on tour?" He says I get to choose my own music and my own costuming and ask my friends to come aboard as well to

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THAT IT IS."

perform dances I choreograph. What was I going to say? "Yeah, absolutely. Yes." It's one of the best things that ever happened to me career-wise, and basically popularized Tribal Fusion overnight. We did fifty-eight cities in sixty-one days on the second tour. [It was around this time, after consulting with Carolena, that] I decided to call my style Tribal Fusion. I wanted people to know what I was fusing with, who my teacher was, and where my roots were.

It was a lot of sudden exposure for you. Overwhelming?
At the beginning, I was deeply in denial about how commercial the venture was. After the excitement wore off, learning about the big corporations we were partnering with, I got more and more uncomfortable. I used to cry and cry and feel so conflicted. "Fuck, I can't believe I have to go do an interview on Clear Channel and then dance at Borders." Eventually I stopped doing some of the most unpleasant promo stuff; it got too hard for me to stomach. Thankfully, Miles was cool with that. But there was just no getting around the fact that this was a totally commercial venture.

Tribal's *huge* now. Big enough that every year, for over a full decade now, your global community has been getting together up in Sebastopol, California for Tribal Fest. What's that been like, lately?
In 2010, there was a huge range of emotions. Often you get these default modes: serene, sexy, menacing, mysterious. Last year, there was more variation. I saw two pieces where the dancers were just expressing total rage. Then there were these sweet fairyland pieces, all toy-box sparklies. There was some vaudevillian stuff in there, plenty of playful comedic antics. And the one the grabbed me most of all, this big group performance that conveyed some very deep commentary.

The UNMATA troupe's piece?
Yes. It was extraordinary. They came out and did this ostentatious fashion show – strutting, showing everyone their fancy frills, looking fabulous. Then, slowly, they started to break it all down, tearing pieces of their costumes off, trying to run off the stage, grabbing at each other. They were expressing vulnerability, loss, panic – that feeling of being separated from one another, of disconnecting while competing. It was incredible. I wish that the director, Amy Sigil, could be here right now to talk about it. But it was amazing to see someone bring attention to the fact that we all experience those same emotions – that no matter how dolled up we are, deep down we're all feeling that loneliness and separateness. Amy unified all of us with that piece.

And this year?
This year the emphasis seemed to be on big and exciting, crazy and over the top. Some of it doesn't seem so Tribal, so I wonder if we'll need another classification eventually. This form is growing like a crazy morning glory… who knows what nooks it's going to dig into, next!

How did you meet the various people associated with your current traveling group, The Indigo Belly Dance Company, namely Mardi Love and Zoe Jakes?
The Indigo has gone through a lot of iterations. Years ago, Heather Stants showed me some Urban Tribal VHS footage of Mardi, and I realized that I was looking at the best dancer I had ever seen. Then, lucky for me, Mardi moved to the Bay Area from San Diego. Mardi and I started up with Ariellah Aflalo, also an incredible talent, widely credited as the woman who started incorporating pop 'n' lock and heavy gothic elements into Tribal Fusion. Love her. Janice Solimeno and Michelle Campbell were original members as well. Zoe Jakes, who, I have to say, is one of the great geniuses of belly dance in our time, I've known since I moved to the Bay Area. We met her when Zoe had just started belly dancing. She was six months in, this brand-

new baby dancer, but I knew even then that she was a force of nature. I remember being like, "You watch zat girl. She has ze bug; she has ze crazy eye. Get her out of ze fucking water." *[laughs]* Eventually Zoe and Mardi and I settled into a touring/home schedule together and have been working together as a trio with the occasional guest dancer for a few years now.

Would you say that the belly dance world is more inclusive of varying body types than other dance forms?
Not necessarily. There was a little bit of a backlash when I started getting better known, because I'm built the way that I am. The belly dance world thought I was too skinny. There are still stigmas about being too this or too that. That's what I love about tribal belly dance, especially American Tribal Style. ATS is all about the variation of shape and texture and color. You get to see thin women dancing right next to big ladies and smiling at each other and having a hell of a time. And to think, I used to torture myself, worrying that my butt was too big! Growing up in Southern California in the '80s, I had these fucking body issues. I thought I was only allowed to express joyful sensuality if I looked a certain way. Remember those pre-Jennifer Lopez days? The ideal ass was *no* ass. Tiny little booty. Well, I don't have a small booty. As a teenager, my internal monologue was, "Oh, I don't have the right butt. Therefore, I can't be an actualized sexual being. I must hide my body from my boyfriend. I can't go to the beach." Then, one day, in the late '80s, I went to a Renaissance Faire up in Northern California. I was in my little bodice, I had my claw necklace with the faceted crystal in it. *[laughs]* I was watching a stage show, and this woman came out. I have no idea how much she weighed, but she was a *big* girl. And she was one of the most beautiful women I have ever, *ever* seen. Easily. She was dripping in jewelry, and wearing the Egyptian fabric called *assuit*, which is cloth netting threaded with strands of real silver. It drapes like liquid mercury. This woman came out onto the stage so confidently. Her choreography was about reveling in flesh-shaking, primarily. She would move her hip to one side, letting the flesh ripple and settle, and then look at the audience with this knowing, pleased smile. Like, "Get a load of that. You know it's good." It was just about the sexiest thing I'd ever seen. She looked like *cake* to me, just so deliciously tasty. Watching her, this realization hit me and flooded through my whole body: for the first time, I really understood that it's not about how you look; it's about the way you feel about yourself. I just sat there and cried and cried and cried. I still don't know her name. The name of the dance company was Hahbi 'Ru. I started taking belly dance lessons the next day. I was sixteen.

Circling back to the subject of imitation versus inspiration, you're always vigilant about giving credit where it's due, and while you've used your various mentors' ideas as a springboard for your own dance, it's never mimicry. With some of the fledgling dancers, there's more than a bit of "Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery" concerning you, which is natural. Still, in a creative community like yours, where everyone's working so closely together, building off one another's ideas while simultaneously celebrating individuality and personal innovation, how do you draw healthy boundaries?
I'm at a good place in my career, and because people recognize where the work came from, I don't feel threatened. I know other dancers have had a different experience. No matter what, though, I think it's important to remind each other that none of us came up with *any* of this ourselves. For example, until very recently, I was under the erroneous presumption that I created the halter bra, just because I was the first person I'd seen to do it. Recently I've been wearing a halter bra that I made, and Mardi picked up some awesome black-and-white stripy silk fabric for pantaloons. I just saw a picture from 1968 of the troupe one of my teachers was in, and this dancer called Pepper was wearing striped pantaloons and a halter bra. I put that photo on my desktop as a reminder that there is nothing new under the sun; there are only infinite chances to rediscover and interpret.

What are your biggest influences right now in terms of aesthetic? You've mentioned Mardi a lot, of course. Who else?

Well, right now, well, I'm kind of obsessed with Zelda Boden. Anita Berber. Alfonse Mucha. Leon Bakst. Tiffa Novoa. Sha Sha Higby just continues to inspire me for all time. Turn-of-the-century photos of Folies Bergère showgirls. Egon Schiele. I've been returning a lot to the Classic Dance Troupe designs, and old photographs from some Egyptian films from the '30s. A lot of erotic French postcards. The women's headdresses in *Fellini Satyricon* are breathtaking. And sometimes you just come across a random image somewhere that changes how you think about everything. There's this postcard that Mardi gave me, of this young girl from Tajikistan a hundred years ago, that haunts me. Old turn-of-the-century photographs of nomadic peoples – from the Tibetan nomads to Central Asian nomads to North African nomads to Indian nomads – are all endlessly inspiring to me.

Do you take it as a compliment when someone tells you that what you do is "hot" or "sexy," or do you find that exasperating?
It's all about context. I will say that sometimes, when I work with photographers and filmmakers, they'll direct me to "be sexy" and I have to tell them, "Hey, you know, that's really not what I'm going for here." Frankly, I would rather look twisted, grotesque, and odd than "sexy." I just don't find standardized sexiness interesting. Anybody can do that. Mostly it just looks like you're standing there, waiting for someone to come along and put it in you. Tribal Fusion, as I define it, is about self-respect and hard work and gratitude for the ability to dance. Yes, it's sensual. Of course. But it can be evocative without being full-on *provocative*. I love watching a woman who's comfortable with her body – even expressing her sexuality as part of her humanity, to a degree. But when there's desperation in it, *that* concerns me. Especially when that desperation appears to incite a woman to do anything just to get attention.

You said something a few years ago that really stuck: "People assume that once you reach a certain level of success or notoriety or public exposure, you stop having feelings. That anyone can say any cruel thing they like about you and it's not going to affect you." But of course, it *does* affect you. How do you deal with that kind of rejection, or more accurately, *projection?*
Not very well. I went through a period of abstinence from reading YouTube and Facebook comments. Nothing but face-to-face interaction with friends, because people you know and trust, they're not going to approach out of the blue and say stuff like "Hi, good to see you, your outfit was so stupid, and you have no taste or creativity, and you should be dead." *[laughs]* No, seriously. You reach a certain level, and random people you've never met or spoken to want to *kill* you…or what you represent to them. Recently I read someone's YouTube comment that was literally just "I HATE RACHEL BRICE." Whaa? You hate me because of my *dancing?* But then I remember I felt that way when I was thirteen or so, before I learned to appreciate Rush. At first I hated Rush. I remember watching MTV and just wanting Duran Duran to be on, and "Tom Sawyer" would come on and I would want to *kill* Geddy Lee. *[laughs]* I wanted to *keeell heem*. My point is, when you're young, you define yourself by what you hate almost more than by what you like. It's part of the process of figuring out who you are. I understand that.

Only now, on a far deeper level, you seem to know who you are, and there's so much to *love*. You've moved to this new town and made this beautiful home that you share with your partner, with whom you've got a very nurturing, solid relationship. Maybe growing up isn't so bad, after all?
I think moving here and making the decision to share my house with a partner was a *huge* positive change. I haven't done this for years and swore I would never do it again, but he is just so good. Before I met Sol, I was really on the fast track. There was a lot of drinking, and I just never stopped working, for seven years

straight. Always living out of a suitcase, and I *liked* living wild and free. But then I fell in love, and the warmth and sweetness that came from being in love with him and spending time with him made me want to do healthier things for myself – like creating this home, which is the most nurturing place I have ever lived. Before this, I'd always treated my house as a kind of railway station for life: this is where I go to dump my crap, maybe make some Top Ramen, go on to the next port. For the first time, I've put as much energy into getting this home set up and warm and beautiful as I try to do with a costume. We did that together. [Additionally] we've started a production company, a certification program, and a ding dang dance studio! Datura Studio & Parlour. It's a really beautiful space; I love dancing there. We have a tiny little Victorian tea room in the front, and Sol and I are building it all together from the ground up. I don't know quite how this all happened, we just work so well together that we keep starting new projects. He blows my mind. More generally, I am reaching the point in my life where, for the first time, I am truly aware that I am not going to live forever. From here on out, I want to live as consciously, as presently, as I can.

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What are some of the dreams that you have for the future?
Recently I realized that I have, until now, believed in a youth-obsessed culture that devalues anyone over 40. What?! Wait a minute; that's insanity. And now I'm inspired to do a totally different type of belly dance – a more natural practice that helps lead people to find a way of moving that suits their own bodies rather than trying to force themselves into looking like somebody else. A dance form that involves all kinds of things: making our own costumes out of natural elements, learning how to do natural dyeing, incorporating yoga and visualizations and meditation, maybe even a little bit of witchcraft. No more commodification of our bodies. No more clawing at each other to get to the top. I drank a bunch of coffee, and I wrote a fucking five-page manifesto about what I'm calling "Natural Belly Dance" for now. It's still a rough draft, but here's some of it:

"Natural Belly Dance focuses on the development of the student as artist and community member rather than the teacher as a powerful and important personality with the answers. Natural Belly Dance believes that each participant can find their own answers and develop their own style. Natural Belly Dance does not seek to train people to be better dancers in order to commodify themselves and put their bodies on sale. Natural Belly Dance does not encourage selling one's talents, but seeks to trade and perform for service. Whenever possible, Natural Belly Dance performances are arranged for no more than 250 people at a time, allow no photography, and use live music to foster a feeling of intimacy and presence. A performance that lives and dies in that moment will be treated as the precious and momentary experience that it is. Natural Belly Dance finds there's beauty in deep sources. It does not seek to paint desirable and saleable features on real women. Natural Belly Dance seeks to find beauty and radiant health, a generous heart, and a love for craft, dance, and music. We seek to shift the attention from glamour and money and popularity to health, celebration, and seeing beauty in all people and situations. Just as a good photographer finds the unique and beautiful qualities of each face, young or old, Natural Belly Dance finds the qualities of each dancer that brings them to a place of self-acceptance and to a feeling of unique contribution."

Wow. What you're suggesting – if it took off – could create a substantial cultural shift.
I'm so excited! Instead of teaching people how to be glamazons and badasses, constantly trying to be better than each other, this would be a practice that let us dance together and enjoy each other, and find a way to be creative and have *fun.* I taught a workshop in Costa Rica a while back, and found myself in a strange position: challenging my students' preconceptions about fame and success as a performer. I implored these girls to ask themselves if being a belly dance superstar was really going to make them happy. They were like, "Well, yeah!" I said, "Are you telling me that having thousands and thousands of people thinking that you are their favorite dancer is going to make you happy? Because I'm here to tell you that fame like that, by itself, is *not* going to do it for you."

You're certainly in a unique position to know that.
So I keep telling these girls, "You need to cultivate relationships. Don't forget about your family. Stay in touch with your mom, you know? If you abandon everything and everyone you love to step on top of other people, and neglect your heart in the pursuit of this one thing that you think is going to do it for you, it's *not.* You can have that thing, but that will *never* be enough." I talk to them now, and I no longer feel desperate or anxious, or like I've started aging. That's how I felt a year ago, like, "Oh, my God, these younger girls are getting better than me, and my students are getting better than me, and I'm aging and I'm not going to be 'the best' and I'm not going to look young anymore." Thinking back, I've realized that no point where I have supposedly been "on top" did I feel secure.

It's like a sickness, isn't it? A neurotic, self-doubting social disease that infects –
– all of us.

Why do even the most creative and free-spirited people of our generation waste years of our life feeling that way, unfairly comparing, struggling just to come into the moment? To take the time to enjoy our lives, and be grateful and joyful about what we have and what we *can* do, of just…
…of just being what we are. Yep. In their books, the authors Cheri Huber and Pema Chödrön both talk about these issues constantly. About this mindset where there is no achievement big enough to satisfy you, because the moment that you achieve something, you're just making another goal. It's not like you ever say, "Wow, I am totally happy with myself." You never let yourself feel that self-acceptance. Pema is always saying…don't you guys get it? It's *right now.*

"Start where you are."
I'm starting to understand what phase two is. I know my career is just beginning. It feels so good.

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"A Time of Such Exquisite Plumage"

Lucid Dreaming with Jared Joslin

Interview by Meredith Yayanos

Jared Joslin's paintings are gilded portals to the sensual past. Exploring his work, we encounter thriving pockets of nocturnal Weimar nightlife, Dust Bowl circus camps, and glittering pre-code Hollywood nightclubs. Whatever the setting, every facet of each figure (molten eyes and fanning plumes, lustrous hair, cracking greasepaint, radiant jewels) and all of the textures that enfold them (creased collars and glowing pearls, a gown's draping silk, the velvet pile of a chaise lounge, the sheen of an evening glove) are steeped in Golden Age glamour. Joslin has said that what fuels his vision is "the feeling that you don't necessarily fit within your own time. You're drawn to the past in ways you can't quite understand, but feel the pull of it and want to take on [its] dreams." Timeless yet immediate, simultaneously mysterious and direct, his portrait subjects seem to have been painted by the feverish hand of a lucid dreamer.

It's true that while aspects of your paintings are hyper-realistic, there's often a mysterious, slightly eerie quality to the compositions. Would you be comfortable calling it magical realism? It can get itchy, discussing labels... But can you tell us, generally, how dreams, the subconscious, and the intuitive play into your work?

I'm not at ease with labels, either, but my work *is* a form of realism, infused with magic, so I guess magic realism could apply. For me, this kind of visual magic is driven by dreams, the subconscious, and the intuitive. They're very closely related, firing from a similar nervous system. I think it's important not to become too rational or to overthink the work, but to *listen*, and allow the work to direct *you*. At the risk of sounding ridiculous, at times I feel as though I'm in a trance while making my work – as if another Jared has taken the wheel. [My wife and fellow artist] Jessica has often remarked that when I've just started a new painting, she will glance over her shoulder, expecting to see a virtually still-white canvas, and a fully realized face and personality is suddenly staring her down. Once I'm reeling in that mode, there's a lovely interaction between the subconscious and intuitive states of being. That wiring is a part of who we are, and creation is one of the vehicles that can pick up that signal. Lucky for me, I have a strong antenna!

Your entire Awaken to Dream series features a variety of vintage-styled beauties reclined on couches, often with industrial factory landscapes looming behind them. Thematically, they seem particularly concerned with slumber vs. wakefulness, conscious vs. subconscious. Can you tell us a bit more about them?

During the process of making those, I was seduced by the visual rhythm of industrial landscapes, by imagery of smoke billowing from factory chimneys into a luminous evening sky. But once paired with some enigmatic beauty in slumber or repose, I began to think of the backgrounds as signifying something altogether different. The factories, with their luscious and swirling smoke, came to represent the production of dreams, and the churning of thoughts. They became symbolic of *her* thoughts and dreams.

Many of your pieces are influenced by circus life from days of yore. Did you ever dream of running away with the big top, or some sideshow carnival?

The danger, the grit, the human oddities! I mean, could you imagine spending time with Johnny Eck or Frances O'Connor? Or watching Bird Millman, gracefully defying death while tiptoeing the high wire? The circus seems like a dream realized; it dazzles and delights. The making of circus paintings serves as transport, handing me the ticket to that long-gone world, allowing me to run away with the carnival and live under the big top. I look at photographs from that era and they enchant me, imprinting on my psyche. It's a feeling that fits like a kid leather glove. There was so much mystery, such flamboyant spectacle, and such extraordinarily thrilling feats. I think if I was to return to the golden age of the circus, I would explode to dust!

A deep, abiding love of certain German painters from the '20s/'30s also seems to have had a profound effect on your own artistic development. Who, specifically, captures your imagination? Christian Schad, Pyke Koch, August Sander, Otto Dix spring immediately to mind...but there must be countless other names. Please, tell us about them, and tell us about Weimar Berlin.

I love that this question is phrased as if I lived during the Weimar period. In a way, it feels as though I had, because I look at and study these works pretty much on a daily basis. Yes! Yes! Yes! Yes to all of the artists mentioned, and the list could go on and on. Dix was probably the one who got me started, in terms of exploring that time period. Early on in art school, my work was often compared to Dix and his contemporaries; once I saw their images, it was love at first sight! I couldn't believe what I was seeing, especially Dix's portrait of the dancer, Anita Berber. To this day, my interest has only increased. Other German artists that are impacting my work at the moment

(opposite page) *Circus Self-Portrait,* 2007. Acrylic on canvas. 34" x 26"

Twilight (detail), 2004. Acrylic on canvas. 38" x 48"

are Jeanne Mammen, Karl Hubbuch, Gert Heinrich Wollheim, Otto Griebel, George Grosz, Rudolph Schlichter, and Max Beckmann. I keep rediscovering the brilliance in all of their different approaches and means of expression. I tend to be drawn specifically to the matter-of-fact realism that crystallized as [The New Objectivity]. To me, it is the most vital of the various post-Expressionist styles that developed in Germany after the war. I'm particularly drawn to the branch of realistic painting and drawing known as Verism. The Verists painted the *demimonde,* individuals living in the margins of society; tarts and sailors, cocaine addicts, transvestites, cabaret dancers, but also the Republic's businessmen, lawyers, art dealers and long-forgotten poets. These artists dealt with portraiture as a means to not only reveal the nature of the sitter, but as a way to hold up a mirror to the times in which they were living. The brief period of the Weimar Republic began in 1919 and ended in 1933 when Hitler came into power and fucked everything up. That time between the wars seemed to spark a new freedom and growth – both in life and in visual expression – that hadn't existed before. That period seemed unhinged, a time when everything was possible. It was a brilliant and sinister era, when Berlin was the capital of art, sex, and violence.

Along a similarly visceral line, it's evident from your work that you have a strong appreciation and awareness of texture: leather, beadwork, fur, feathers, skin. This might sound strange (maybe a little pervy), but one can almost smell the worlds you've painted. When you work, do your other senses kick in, do you immerse yourself in the world you're creating? Or is it more distanced?

A little pervy is A-OK by me. I permit you to smell my painted worlds! (It would be interesting to ask viewers: what, if anything, do they hear, smell, or taste from looking at paintings?) Those things we see, those textures in paint, if rendered convincingly, *should* produce smells, sounds, tactile sensations, etc. They certainly do for me. I'm there even before there's a sketch on the canvas or paper. A smell or sound may spark an idea just as strongly as something I see. It stews in the soul. I've even made paintings based on the sounds or smells from a dream.

Over the past couple of years, you've been experimenting with different media and looser compositional styles: graphite, sketches, watercolors. What challenges and revelations have you faced as a result?

I realized again how essential it is for an artist to poke around and experiment beyond their comfort zone. At a recent Mucha show in Vienna, and the Dix show in NYC, I was amazed by the vast variety of expression that one artist can produce. An artist might specialize in a particular medium, which is their strong arm, so to speak. But what happens when they take on a different material or means of expression? What I found was an exciting current that ran through all the works. With Dix, for example, regardless of whether it was splattered and bloody watercolors, gestural charcoal, or a surgically precise rendering, they all expressed the heart of the artist. Artists are complex individuals. My own challenge is to keep that visual and spiritual wanderlust active and to continue to experiment.

Flora and fauna of all manner flourish in your work, but birds seemed to take on an extra special meaning. It's easy to draw a parallel between these plumed creatures and the elegant '20s-30s era humans you paint.

I love birds! I have ever since I was a little cowboy. I used to draw and fill pages full of them. I can't pinpoint where that comes from, but they've always held a special place in my heart. There's an otherworldly quality about them. The parallel you see is no mistake. That, in part, is why I'm so drawn to that particular era: the powdered faces, painted lashes and lips, the plumes in the hats and hair, ruffled and luxurious fur collars, glimmering silk stockings and fingertips clipped into lacquered claws. It was a time of such exquisite plumage! The gentlemen seem like birds, too, with their shellacked hair, tailored suits, and monocles glimmering like birds' eyes. Come to think of it, *everyone* from that time period seems slick and feathered like birds.

Three years ago, Coilhouse interviewed your wife, the sculptor Jessica Joslin, for our first print issue. Now, unavoidably and delightfully, it's necessary to ask you very similar questions. You and Jessica are both very driven and prolific. Such couplings – two blazing artists working in very different mediums – are very rare. How has her vision affected yours, and vice versa?

I don't think a day goes by that we forget what a wonderful rarity it is to have the relationship and connection we share. We're a *team,* and we give and take from one another openly, without ever feeling a need to compete. We combine our strengths and push each other to stay motivated and excited about what we do as we define, and

(opposite page) *Green Gloves,* 2008. Oil on canvas board. 24" x 20

redefine, ourselves creatively. When you live with someone, there's bound to be a natural mutation and evolution. We share not just a living space, but a studio; it's all one and the same. We are always surrounded by each other's work, and whether it's directly influencing us, or by way of osmosis, there is something – call it synergy, or a current – that magically occurs from constantly sharing ideas, interests, desires, and wishes.

Can you give us some examples of standout work by other artists that has taken your breath away?

Last spring, Jessica and I visited the Belvedere Castle, an incredible museum in Vienna. Among the scores of breathtaking paintings was one by Egon Schiele that stopped me dead in my tracks: *Portrait of Eduard Kosmack,* painted in 1910. The entire painting seemed to vibrate. There was a particular brilliance to how he handled the eyes that really struck me – there were bits of autumn orange and rich, dark browns circling the fiery pale green eyes, which ignited a remarkable intensity! Also, Christian Schad's *Self-Portrait* from 1927. I've adored this painting for years, but upon first seeing it at the Neue Galerie in NYC, I was completely floored. I couldn't wait to get up close to gaze upon some of my favorite details: the line of the woman's nose and her scarred cheek, the delicate ribbon tied neatly around her wrist and his curious transparent green shirt, to name just a few aspects. I could stare at it for hours. Actually, I *did* stare at it for hours. The same day, different room, I came across George Grosz's *Portrait of John Foerate* (*Man with Glass Eye*), 1926. What first seemed like a fairly simple composition of a seated man smoking and reading a book, turned into such a surprise when I noticed the maniacal-looking glass eye sunk into his right socket. Grosz's assured hand and moody brushwork made it remarkably charged! The same NYC trip, a day later, I walked over to the Guggenheim to see Matthew Barney's *Cremaster Cycle*. It was an amazing experience to watch all his strange and delightful tales back to back. I was blown away by all of them, but *Cremaster 1, 2*, and *5* were my favorites. I don't want to bore the good readers of *Coilhouse*, as this list could really go on and on, but before I close this topic, I have to tip my hat to Jessica's sculptures and my brother, photographer Russell Joslin's photos. I think that what they're doing is brilliant and I'm also very fortunate to have them as family. I have watched and lived with their work for many, many years and my breath is constantly taken away by their continued creative accomplishments.

What are some of your favorite silent films? Books from the early 20th century? Fashion designers? Actors? Actresses? Entertainers? Etc.?

I loved watching Louise Brooks in *Diary of a Lost Girl* by G.W. Pabst. Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* is so visually lush, it sets the standard. Also loved watching Lon Chaney as an "armless" knife thrower with Joan Crawford in Tod Browning's *The Unknown*. As far as writers go, I'm a big fan of George Bataille. In particular, *Story of an Eye* and *Madame Edwarda*. Actually, we have several of Hans Bellmer's original etchings from *Madame Edwarda* in our personal collection. Truly amazing images that I've admired for many years, but never thought I'd have the chance to live with! I also enjoy reading the Brothers Grimm fairy tales.

I think the fashion designs of the 1930s Hollywood glamour are lovely, I especially like the costumes done by Adrian and Irene. For actors, I find James Cagney's early performances highly entertaining. He dished out some *killer* one-liners! Clark Gable is also lots of fun, especially when he's teamed up with hotties like Jean Harlow and Claudette Colbert! Love almost all of the Fred and Ginger films. They always brighten my day and I've seen most of them dozens of times.

Musicians: I love to listen to swing, Louis Armstrong, Artie Shaw, Duke Ellington, and Count Basie. I also really like German cabaret songs from Marlene Dietrich, Greta Keller, and The Comedian Harmonists.

Cockatoo, 2010. Oil on canvas. 36" x 18"

You've painted several fascinating self-portraits – very enigmatic. Regardless of dress (clown makeup, harlequin tights, a beautifully wrinkled strongman's work shirt), you've always got this Buster Keaton deadpan going on. Rather sphinx-like. Why do you think that is?

If you never met me you'd probably think I never crack a smile, when in actuality, I laugh quite regularly! I think it may have to do with the painting maintaining the upper edge. The seriousness of my face sets the tone as to how I want the viewer to enter into that world I've created. In most of my self-portraits, my eyes confront the gaze of the viewer directly as well; there's an immediacy and directness in how we first communicate with our eyes. I don't know... it's funny, but in a way it seems I'm following tradition. Most representational self-portraits that I come across are also pretty deadpan. Perhaps on some level it's a protective thing, not wanting to appear vulnerable. The process of making a painting of yourself, seeing it emerge while it looks back at you, is quite an experience! It's a way of documenting yourself in a very specific moment in time, leaving behind traces of the person you were then. It is also tangible proof you existed, that you sat in front of that canvas, a validation or affirmation of a life lived.

(opposite page) *Masquerade Ball*, 2010. Oil on canvas. 40" x 30"

ENJOY LIVING IN BRAZIL

TERRY GILLIAM

INTRODUCTION
+ ROSS ROSENBERG
MEREDITH YAYANOS

INTERVIEW
NADYA LEV

"HI THERE. I WANT TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT DUCTS."
Brazil: **"It's about flights of fantasy. And the nightmare of reality. Terrorist bombings. And late-night shopping. True Love. And creative plumbing."**

Few luminaries of cinema have as many pages dedicated to their process as **TERRY GILLIAM**. No doubt, there are directors with thicker tomes, but most, if not all, have the distinct advantage of being dead. Mr. Gilliam's abiding vigor is a handicap for which he can hardly be faulted. As it stands, the life's work of Monty Python's sole American member remains a fascinating point of interest, owing both to his unique filmmaking process, and to his quixotic endurance in the face of seemingly insurmountable obstacles.

An early career spent battling unimaginative studio executives gave way to a series of unfortunate occurrences that have stymied some of Gilliam's latest efforts. It's a testament to his singular vision that he still prevails in this era of feature-length toy commercials and amusement park rides masquerading as film. Here, after all, is the conquering hero who brought us time-traveling little people, commando air-conditioning repairmen, magical realist mass-waltzes through Grand Central Station, and the best visual interpretation to date of the late Hunter S. Thompson's mad, bad world – a feat made all the more astonishing by the fact that the good Doctor was both alive and well-armed during the film's production.

BEING BATSHIT GONZO HAS WORKED WELL FOR GILLIAM over the course of his thirty-six years of directing, and that signature eccentricity has managed to infect not only the films of other directors, but our very cultural groundwater. A master of wide-angle shots, he has explored the 14mm lens so thoroughly that it is now colloquially known in the film industry as "The Gilliam." *Brazil*, which celebrated its 25th anniversary last December, is a prescient masterpiece. With its marriage of old and new, of the Orwellian and the Kafkaesque, its bleakly comic future-noirish sensibilities, scrap-deco industrial set dressings, and arcane world-building props (for instance, those retrofitted typewriter/computer hybrids with magnified cathode ray tubes, called Consoles), the film is as relevant now as it was in 1985. Its anachronistic juxtapositions not only helped define the term "retro-futurism" – they went on to influence the likes of Jean-Pierre Jeunet and Marc Caro, Alex Proyas, Guillermo del Toro, and the Coen Brothers. A quick Google search for "steampunk" reveals dozens of personal computers stripped of their housings and refitted with any number of outmoded brass bits and baubles… nearly every one of them cross-bred with a typewriter keyboard.

Far more unsettling than the film's pervasive aesthetic is the ease with which one can draw parallels between *Brazil's* sociopolitical atmosphere and current events. No doubt, for every dystopia ever written or filmed, sung or drawn, there are doomsayers ready to point out similarities with reality. Is it any wonder that recent American airport screening methods instituted by the TSA have spurred pattern recognition? When presented with the dual-pronged, (barely) figurative cattle prod of being stripped naked by the X-ray eyes of an invasive government agency or groped in one of their dingy private rooms, it's hard to banish the grim little voice that whispers, *The future has arrived, and it is* **BRAZIL.**

Perhaps his gift for prophecy partially goaded Gilliam's renouncement of his US citizenship in 2006. Coilhouse recently caught up with the affable expat to discuss film, how hard it is to break up with the United States, and the primal thrill of building tall, unwieldy structures of whimsy…and then watching them burn.

Before you became a director, you worked in a Chevrolet assembly plant, at a children's theater, at an ad agency, and as a male model at a clothing store. What are some other jobs you did before you fell into directing?
I worked in a butcher shop for a while – at the lowest rung of the hierarchy, which was about four people. I used to have to head into the cold storage, which was always tricky because if you didn't pay attention you'd find yourself impaled on one of those spiky things that the meat hung from. And I worked in a restaurant for a while, just swabbing the floors and cleaning up messes. One time the salad boy was off for a few nights, so I had to do his job as well as mine. One minute I would be on the floor, scrubbing away with some awful disinfectant, and then somebody would say, "Salad with vinaigrette," and I would leap up, and with my filthy hands, scoop up the lettuce, throw it into the bowl, and put out the vinaigrette. I've been wondering how many people died of poisoning from that. I also worked at the post office, where the game was to see how far away you could stand from the sorting cubicles and still throw the letters into the correct section. I worked as a shipping clerk in a factory that made beauty salon furniture, packing huge lounge chairs and hoisting them onto the trucks. I got to do some upholstery, which was done using these high-powered air staple guns, which were deadly, and used, most of the time, for shooting at each other.

Was working at the children's theater your first immersion in the world of sets, actors, and scripts? Has working there influenced your approach to filmmaking at all?
No, not at all. [laughter] I had to paint myself green. I had to play ogres and be silly and build sets, which I was already doing anyway in high school. My dad used to come back from work installing these partitions, and they came in big cardboard boxes that were four by eight feet. I used this thick corrugated cardboard to make sets for school productions, senior proms – all those things. So moving into a real children's theater was not much different. It was just working with very little and trying to create a magical environment to fool the kiddies into thinking life was interesting. So, no, I didn't learn anything about filmmaking there. I'm still trying to work out how you make movies. The only way I learned was just by watching films – lots of films – and then somebody letting me become a film director, like a group called Monty Python.

You're quoted as saying that "filmmaking is only slightly less of a waste of time than film school."
There was a night film school in New York that I attended for four nights over the course of a month. I just found that, as a kid coming from California, my kind of energy and tempo and attitude towards life was quite different from the New York kids, who were very aggressive and always grabbed the equipment. After a couple of sessions of that, I said, "Bugger that. I'm not going to hang around here." Then I got a job in this studio that did stop-motion photography – dancing cigarette packs – through a friend of mine. They said, "Well, we don't really *have* a job here, so we can't pay you," and I said, "I don't care, I just want to hang around, I want to move equipment, I want to touch things, I want to understand the physical manifestation of filmmaking." And that was really important. As far as film studies were concerned, just going to the movies seemed to be enough for me. I've never done more than that. You watch movies and then you go out, get yourself a little camera, and you write little stories, get together some friends, and try to shoot. That's what I did in New York.

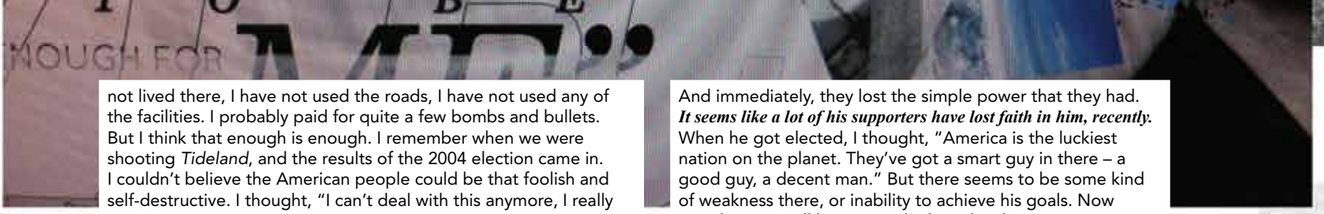
When you lived in New York, it was on a pretty meager budget.
Yeah. I had an eight-by-eight-foot room with a washbasin and a closet, one bed, and a little desk. And I'd have to put everything on the bed when I worked at the desk, and then when I went to bed, I would put everything on the desk. And that's when I had my pet cockroach. That's all I could afford in those days. But I was delighted to be there. Here I was in New York. I was working with Harvey Kurtzman, my hero, at *Help! Magazine*. I got paid $50 a week. If I were on the dole, I would have been paid $52 a week. It was extraordinary, and I just was having a great time in New York running around. I had no money, and out of that $50 a week, I saved $25 every week, which then allowed me to buy my first Bolex camera and a tape recorder. I used to keep a little notebook. Every penny I spent was in there, and I would hesitate to buy a pack of gum because it was another $0.05. And I did that for a few years.

Around the time you made *12 Monkeys*, you said in an interview, "It just seems I have this German-Expressionistic-Destructivist-Russian-Constructivist view of the future." What about these art styles appeals to you?
I love German Expressionism. I love *Metropolis*. When I saw *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, that whole world just got to me. I loved the angularity of it – that the world is suddenly no longer at right angles; it's acute angles, and lots of shadow where mystery is born. And there was something about the freedom of it: you can be grotesque; you can push things. And that really comes from being a cartoonist because that's what the cartoonist does: you stretch and push and shove. There was something about German Expressionism, particularly in films, that just hit a chord with me and it's always been there. As far as Constructivism goes, I love Lyubov Popova. Rodchenko has always walked away with all the kudos and the praise and the press, but she's better. How she holds some of her compositions together, I just don't know.

In 2006 you renounced your US citizenship. How did that feel?
It was funny. I had to go down to the US Embassy and say, "I want to give up my US citizenship." And they said, "What?" And I said, "You know, I want to get rid of it." And they said, "No, no, that's not the correct word." And finally I found out the word I had to use was *renounce*, which actually seemed far more powerful and violent and angry than what I intended. It was kind of like *Brazil:* "I'll have a rare steak." "Say the number, please! You have to say the number." I had to go and fill out lots of forms, and then I had a session with the diplomatic counsel, and I explained that I'd had enough. And then I had to go away for a month to consider in-depth what I was doing. And then I came back and had another session with them, trying to say no, I really didn't want to be a US citizen anymore, and they kept trying to get me to reconsider, because they were all Python fans. [laughs]

So was it a politically motivated decision?
George W. finally got to me, but it was more about the fact that I discovered that when I die, they assess everything I own in the world, and the house we're living in now, which we've lived in for twenty-five years, is probably now worth about twenty times the amount it was purchased for. And when I die, my wife won't have to pay any capital gains tax on it in Britain because it's our primary residence; it's our house. But the Americans would charge me for capital gains on our house, and my wife would have to sell the house to pay the death duties.

"That is your receipt for your husband, and this is my receipt for your receipt."
You got it. I mean, I've been paying taxes in two countries for forty years. I've given America so much money, and I have



not lived there, I have not used the roads, I have not used any of the facilities. I probably paid for quite a few bombs and bullets. But I think that enough is enough. I remember when we were shooting *Tideland*, and the results of the 2004 election came in. I couldn't believe the American people could be that foolish and self-destructive. I thought, "I can't deal with this anymore, I really can't."

Have you heard about the new scanners at airports and the whole controversy around that?
I think the scanner is a joke. I don't think that half the new security measures being employed are doing anything other than making everybody aware that security is ever-present, whether it's effective or not. Once the ritual get going, it maintains control over the people. It keeps everything much more rigid. It keeps people living in a constant state of fear and worry that at any moment, some horrible act is going to be committed and everyone will die, which is bullshit. And people get used to it; they accept it as reasonable, and that's what bothers me. I don't think it's reasonable after a certain point. I'm very curious how much is ever discovered in any security checks that will actually make any difference in the number of planes dropping out of the sky.

There's been a creative backlash to both the full-body scanners and "enhanced" pat-downs. People have been responding with little acts of civil disobedience: stripping down to underwear at checkpoints, going through scanners in shirts with the Fourth Amendment printed on them in metallic ink, staging things like National Opt-Out Day. In response, the Department of Homeland Security has started labeling any person who "interferes" with TSA screening procedures a "domestic extremist."
Are you serious? When did this happen? That's just crazy.

It was an internal leaked memo from some meetings between the DHS, TSA, and Obama's security advisors that surfaced in the past week. The memo defines a domestic extremist as "any person, group, or alternative media source" that actively objects to the new TSA procedures, or elicits support for anyone who engages in travel disruptions at airports in response to them.
Enjoy living in *Brazil*, then.

Thanks. Thanks a lot. [laughs]
Oh, Jesus, this is unbelievable. I really wish I wasn't as disappointed as I am becoming in Obama.

Yeah?
I don't know why he can't seem to get it together. When the Democrats lost the Senate seat in Massachusetts, I thought, "Oh, my God, it's over." That was as safe a seat as you could hope for. And immediately, they lost the simple power that they had. ***It seems like a lot of his supporters have lost faith in him, recently.*** When he got elected, I thought, "America is the luckiest nation on the planet. They've got a smart guy in there – a good guy, a decent man." But there seems to be some kind of weakness there, or inability to achieve his goals. Now people say it's all long-term thinking, but he's got two years now of a pretty much lame-duck presidency if he is not careful. His best hope is that the economy will turn around and everybody will be so happy that it will keep him in.

Maybe he'll surprise us in the next two years.
I don't know. The problem is he was handed a poisoned chalice. To be handed the mess that was given to him when he took the office – it's almost impossible for anybody to fix. And the Republicans knew that damn well.

Meanwhile, there seems to be this celebration of ignorance on the Right, with the popularity of figures like Glenn Beck, Michele Bachman, Sarah Palin. As Palin recently said: "We have to stand by our – "
" – by our friends and allies, North Korea." I am really worried. America has been very clever at making itself dumb. I love the fact that some parts of America have basically removed history from the curriculum. It's like Pol Pot and Khmer Rouge in Cambodia, where every day is the first day of your life. Every day is day zero and year zero. Let's start again.

Then again, historical reenactment is a very popular American pastime. Reenacting of the Civil War is said to have started before the real fighting had even ended. And we love our Ren Faires. Have you ever been?
I was at one of the very first ones, in the mid-'60s. It was very different then. I'm one of the lucky people who got to be the right age at the right time, because everything was sort of blossoming. Renaissance Faire was fantastic in LA. Everybody dressing up; wonderful things were going on. We were learning about the whole world, not just about our little patch of it. Indian music arrived; the Brits arrived in force. Everybody was exploring and exploding. It was like springtime.

There's an event in Nevada. You may have heard of it.
Burning Man.

Yes! You know what the theme was last year? "Metropolis."
It's wonderful that it's still alive in America, in small pockets around the country where something like Burning Man becomes a focus and people come out of the woodwork. The

"AS FAR AS FILM STUDIES WERE CONCERNED, JUST GOING TO THE MOVIES SEEMED ENOUGH FOR ME."

PHOTOGRAPHY Allan Amato
STYLIST Naomi Gray
MAKEUP Michelle Webb
ASSISTANT Christiane Shillito

same kind of attitude that we had in the '60s: "Here we go, it's show time, folks." I see a lot of pictures of it; I've got books about it. I was really intrigued.

You should go. It could be really fun.
Where do you live? Do you have a tent you stay in or camper or what?

You can. Some people pitch a tent; some bring an RV.
Yeah. Some people bring clothes and other people don't. You know, if you are into that sort of thing, one day you've got to make your way to Valencia in Spain for Las Fallas.

What's that?
Okay. This has been going on for a long time, and once a year. I think there are four or five days of the festival. During the festival, the center of Valencia is closed off to traffic. Now, Valencia's a big town. At every crossroad in the town, all the different neighborhoods build these huge paper-mâché tableaux, gigantic figures thirty to thirty-five feet high. They're very expensive, very complicated. There are, in fact, professional people that make them. And every neighborhood gathers the money together to have one made. There are maybe 100, 120, of these incredibly elaborate, beautiful, huge, outrageous things. They are political satires. There's stars in there, there's mythological beings – all sorts of stuff. Every inch of the town is full of these things. And then on the last night, I think at eleven o'clock, they are all set alight and they burn. They fill them up with fuel, and they're designed to collapse within themselves. You can see signs on buildings from the previous year, where they all sort of bent and warped from the heat. And they all burn, and from the sky it's like the city is on fire. Then everybody makes their way to the main square, like a million people. And there is one last remaining construction, a big one, the special one. When I was there, it was Gulliver, and on Gulliver's shoulder stood the mayor, who was a woman at the time. And that had to be at least sixty feet high if not taller: a gigantic figure. And they all start singing this beautiful hymn, a million people. And they light this thing. Slowly, smoke starts building. It doesn't go up in flames immediately. Smoke starts to pour out of the neck of the figure, around the collar, or the cuffs, and suddenly hands start burning. And the whole thing is just extraordinary. Everybody is singing, weeping, as this gigantic Gulliver burns to the ground. And it's all about sacrifice. You spent a fortune building these things. You had several days of celebration; it was just a wild time. And then, boom, it burned. And the interesting thing is, again, during the day, everyone is throwing firecrackers, you have fireworks, and the noise is deafening, nonstop. And you go to bed after the grand finale and you wake up in the morning, and you walk out and the traffic is resumed. All the ashes are swept up. There are no markings, nothing to say any of this has ever happened. And it happens every year.

Wow! If one didn't know what you were describing, they might think it was Burning Man – the celebration of impermanence, the "leave no trace" element.
Correct. It's great that Burning Man is doing it, because Valencia has been doing this since the Middle Ages. The Spanish are great because they really do maintain their fiestas. The fiestas are about something meaningful. They're about community, the city they share. They unite the people. Even though they compete with one another, they're actually being united at the same time. It's pretty special. And Burning Man does so as well. Looking at books of Burning Man, it seems like there's more sex and drugs and rock 'n' roll and wild times. Las Fallas is more conservative in that sense.

It's true. There can be a Vegas-like element to it, this complete bacchanalia of human excess and bad techno. Which is a fun experience in its own right. For some people, that's the spiritual component of Burning Man. For others, it's more about the art, the act of building and destroying. Poets and architects and scientists go there to do things that no one has ever done before.
Brilliant. There is hope for America yet.

INFERNO

"For [Lothar] Schreyer, the perfect performance consisted of pure sound, pure movement, pure color, and pure form."

MEL GORDON
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Zoetica Ebb

Setting the scene: Late 70s/early 80s, Los Angeles, California.

To hear tell of it, the LA underground was a convulsing hodgepodge of punk, post-punk, surf rock, cabaret, new wave, neo-noir, rockabilly, mariachi, B-movie kitsch, golden-age Hollywoodland iconography, and then some. The weather was fabulous; the hairdos were magnificent. Everyone had forgettable day jobs and a dozen creative confabs to pick from at night on weekends: bands, plays, parties, performance art, public access television shows, coffeehouse spoken word, stand-up comedy, gallery openings, guerilla art incidents, indie film shoots. At Cinema Village, David Lynch's *Eraserhead* screened at midnight. Paul Reubens, recently transplanted from New York, nurtured his Pee Wee Herman stage show. Over at KHJ-TV, fellow Groundlings member Elvira revamped Maila Nurmi's gig for a new generation of freaks and geeks. Meanwhile, on UHF Channel 18, Peter Ivers and his New Wave Theatre guests had license to get as cerebral or silly as they chose. Bands like X, Black Flag and The Cramps (also recovering New Yorkers) were tearing it up in tiny, seething music venues all over town. Jitterbugging through this countercultural soup was an anomaly's anomaly known as…

The Mystic Knights of the Oingo Boingo
Brave Adventures in the
FORBIDDEN ZONE

Smack dab at the center of the Mystic Knights stood Richard Elfman, a flame-haired, wide-eyed young instigator of all manner of unhinged conflagration. In cahoots with a gang of fellow creative abnormals – most conspicuously his little brother Danny – Richard Elfman and the Mystic Knights presented demented, biting satire from the footlights. Formed in 1972, their gleeful shtick took cues from (and liberties with) Max Fleischer cartoons, German Expressionism, the Three Stooges, Cab Calloway, Frank Zappa, Spike Jones, various flapper and vaudeville legends, and the like. As many as fifteen performers, playing over thirty different instruments, would pile onto nightclub stages, presenting *Gong Show*-winning performances that combined old-timey traditions with more sharply modern slapstick. They aped Betty Boop; they riffed off Russian ballet and Balinese gamelan; they featured "graphic female clown nudity and absurdist male boxing violence." Even from an outréphile's standpoint, in subterranean sects where just about anything went, their antics dropped a lot of jaws.

"The Mystic Knights of the Oingo Boingo didn't *exactly* fit in," asserts Richard Elfman, responding to *Coilhouse* questions from his home in Hollywood. "We were pretty eclectic. The snobby end of the 'art crowd' found us vulgar. Music critics shit on us."

"We hung with Devo. [We] played a lot at Madam Wong's, downtown, a seminal punk venue – although The Mystic Knights were never punk. Pee Wee Herman came to the shows, as did Tim Burton. Bette Midler (married to a Kipper Kid) got up on the table and sung at my dinner parties. […] I'd actually conceived of the Mystic Knights of the Oingo Boingo while working in a French theatre company, the Grand Magic Circus, in Europe, a few years earlier. And before that, I cut my theatre teeth directing a (mostly) drag 30s musical ensemble in San Francisco, called The Cockettes. So I wouldn't call us a product of Los Angeles, although we did get inspired by some of the local talent." Elfman rattles off the driving forces behind his work during that time:

> "ABSURDITY (massive balls-out amounts), BEAUTY (timeless music, dance, dreamlike qualities), & POIGNANCY (just a touch). Those are the big THREE of the Mystic Knights of the Oingo Boingo and The Forbidden Zone."

"My rule with the early Mystic Knights music was: nothing contemporary. So we either reproduced killer classics that people couldn't hear live anymore (Josephine Baker, Duke Ellington, Django Rheinhardt), or we did totally crazy, avant-garde stuff that Danny composed." In 1976, as Elfman's interests shifted to filmmaking, he passed leadership of the troupe over to his younger sibling (who gradually morphed it into its more abbreviated incarnation as a ska-tinged New Wave band henceforth simply

called Oingo Boingo). Both brothers were ready to stop trundling around the elaborate props, instruments, and bodies necessary to perform their acts.

It was this transitional phase that spawned the 35 mm cult classic *The Forbidden Zone*. Made on a shoestring budget over the course of three years, the movie was "basically a filmed version of what we were doing on stage with the Mystic Knights of the Oingo Boingo," says Elfman. "As the group was becoming less theatrical and more rock based, I wanted to preserve on film the essence of what we had been doing on stage." His final cut reflects all of the funniest, weirdest, most shocking and brazen attributes of early-era Boingo.

Starring real-life ex-lovers Hervé Villechaize and Susan Tyrrell as the bickering king and queen of a perverse netherworld, *The Forbidden Zone* also showcases the talents of various members of the Mystic Knights, as well as B-movie maniac Joe Spinell, performance art duo The Kipper Kids, members of pioneering street dance troupe The Lockers, and former Warhol superstar Viva. The film's plot revolves around the discovery and exploration of an alternate world known as "The Sixth Dimension," accessible through an anally fixated portal in the basement of one Hercules family's humble Venice, California home. *The Forbidden Zone* was, in fact, initially conceived as "The Hercules Family," a musical shot on 16 mm and made up of a dozen loosely-plotted-together song-and-dance numbers. Over time, as the project's storyline and modest budget grew, Elfman switched over to 35 mm, re-shooting several original scenes and co-writing a proper screenplay with his fellow Knight, director/actor/writer Matthew Bright, who also starred as Squeezit Henderson under the *nom de plume* Toshiro Baloney.

Fantasy Island star Villechaize ("De plane, de plane!"), who happened to be Bright's former roommate, was the only actor to receive a paycheck for his work on the film. According to Elfman, "Hervé would put his S.A.G. check back into the production, come and paint sets evenings, weekends. Hervé was having a thing with Susan. Sometimes when they fought on set, you could only hear her voice in the distance, she having developed an impressive set of pipes on the New York stage. Poor Hervé, with his much smaller voice box; you couldn't hear his part of the argument until you got much closer to the (by now) ex-lovers."

In addition to performing a leading role as Frenchy Hercules, Richard Elfman's then-wife Marie-Pascale served as art director. Elfman says "she was very much responsible for the look of *Forbidden Zone*," designing Expressionistic sets from cardboard and plywood. "*The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* was a big influence. It also worked for our zero-art budget. Black-and-white painted flats didn't cost us anything!" Cave walls and subterranean oubliettes were constructed from garbage bags and Styrofoam. Elfman intended "to have the 'underground' scenes hand-colorized in China, using a technique I saw in some 20's French art movies." The cost, however, proved too great. "Ironically," Elfman adds, "the best colorizers in the world, Legend Films, [colorized] *The Forbidden Zone* last year. I can't watch the black-and-white anymore."

Actor and former Mystic Knight Gene Cunningham provided initial funding for the film. When the well ran dry in the middle of shooting, Richard and Marie-Pascale Elfman further financed their movie by becoming realtors, hustling to sell houses until producer Carl Borack subsidized the completion of *The Forbidden Zone*. Animator John Muto's elaborate cell-by-cell, hand-animated segments proved to be one of the most costly aspects of production. The influence of 20's/30's animator Max Fleischer is evident not only in Muto's work, but also in many of the movie's live-action sequences, which are as close of an approximation to Fleischer's madcap world as one will find in any medium. "I love a number of his *Betty Boop* and *Out of the Inkwell* cartoons. His Betty Boop [rotoscoped animation] with Cab Calloway doing Minnie the Moocher was my favorite. We did an homage to it with Danny as the Devil."

Richard Elfman had no formal film school training. Nevertheless, he ran a tight ship. Because of the unrelenting weirdness of *The Forbidden Zone*, assumptions about psychedelic drug use on the set have persisted in spite of Elfman's repeated denials. "I haven't done any drugs since shortly after high school. I like wine. I find women intoxicating (or 'woman,' I should say, as I'm happily married now). I've never found a necessity to get high to be creative. And when I work on set or in the studio, I expect others not to be stoned or intoxicated, so we can get more done. What people do outside the set, however, is their own biz. I'm not a prude and don't condemn others."

NECROPHILIA. Astral projection. Satanic hot jazz. Empathic poultry. Excessive dry-humping. Unglamorous drag. Yiddish slapstick. Cardboard cars. Gender nonconformity. Expletive-laden song-and-dance numbers depicting the systematic breakdown of the American public school system. Sinister dancing butler frogs. Cringe-inducing BLACKFACE. BDSM – namely threats of violation by cattle-prod. GILLIAMESQUE ANIMATED SEQUENCES DEPICTING INTESTINAL INTERDIMENSIONAL TRAVEL. Industrial tar pit nine-to-fiver nihilism. POOP 'N' DICK 'N' MENSTRUAL JOKES GALORE. No, certainly, the ringleader behind such profluent flapdoodle was anything but a moralist prude. And while drugs may not factor into his creative process, Elfman sounds like he naturally inhabits a trippy mindspace: "My head is filled with surrealistic stuff when I'm awake," let alone asleep and dreaming. "I'm amazed I can function."

Movie critic Andrew Borntreger's assessment of the director's approach is spot-on: "[Saying] 'I am going to make a cult movie' can be the recipe for disaster, but Elfman's product is so outlandish that B-movie veterans often speak of it in hushed tones." Yet there was method to Elfman's cinematic madness. While many cult classics fall into Art Brut, "outsider," or otherwise transcendentally unselfconscious categories, *The Forbidden Zone* feels like the carefully shot and edited product of a culturally savvy (if unconventional) mind. The film's humor, while coarse and lowbrow, feels too sharply focused to be the product of pure, rampaging id; the antics of its larger-than-life leads, even at their most rabid and flailing, never impede the film's relentless forward momentum.

"The theatrical side was pretty spontaneous," says Elfman. "But… without sounding pretentious, there was nuance underneath the grossness. If someone wasn't a trained actor," like Gisele Lindley, for instance (the nubile, awkward young woman who played the Princess in *The Forbidden Zone*), "I directed her in a way as not to make her acting look good – something I learned in French theatre. Rather than try and cover something up, better to use the flaw as part of the show. On the other hand, we had brilliant pros like Susan Tyrrell, Hervé Villechaize, and […] Matthew Bright, whose performances, under all the absurdity, could exude genuine poignancy and gain audience empathy."

"IT'S TRULY ONE OF THE ONLY FILMS OF MINE that never ages – great every New Year's Eve with A GLASS OF ACID."

– Susan Tyrrell (Queen Doris of the Sixth Dimension)

Many of the film's smaller roles were given to non-actors. Richard Elfman's personal accountant appeared under the name Hyman Diamond because Elfman had no idea whether or not he'd want to be credited. His and Danny's own grandfather, Herman Bernstein, took on the role of "a stereotypical Jewish money-changer." Elfman recalls, "I was condemned for being anti-Semitic for [that scene]…but that was my grandfather – and he wasn't acting." Several extras and cameo players were, quite literally, picked up off the street. For "BIM Bam BOOM," a Latin dance number, Richard enlisted a sweet-faced young man in a pair of Mickey Mouse ears to mouth the words of the song. "He was this painfully shy neighborhood kid. We rehearsed and rehearsed and rehearsed. But he froze up on camera." Unwilling to justify the cost of re-shooting an entire, elaborate scene with another actor in the role, Elfman simply pasted Matthew Bright's lips over the boy's in post production. (The resulting effect provides one of the most intense *What the hell did I just watch?* moments in a film that's rife with OMGWTFBBQ.) "I use that as an example to any actors who don't perform the way I direct them," Elfman jibes. Another memorable scene – one in which Matthew Bright's character Squeezit Henderson is "stricken with pseudo menstrual cramps" – features homeless men Elfman coaxed onto the set. "I broke my normal rules and did let those guys have a drink or three."

One of the standout moments of the movie comes about halfway through, when the fearsome-yet-vulnerable Queen Doris struts her stuff atop a dicey Cubism Goes to Vegas styled platform in her madcap court while belting out a surreal torch song, "Witch's Egg" (which leading lady Tyrrell herself penned the lyrics to). It is arguably one of the most delightful Badass Beautiful Bitch moments in cinematic history. "Susan did an amazing job with that song," Elfman says. "And my brother did a whole wacky musical rearrangement after the fact, long after the film was shot."

Reached for comment at her home in Austin, Texas, Tyrrell has fond memories of her work on the picture: "I can honestly tell you, it was the most exhausting yet happiest film work I have done to date. Rick Elfman wanted anything and everything out of me, and it was my pleasure to give it to him. He's a really childish freak, and so am I.

[*The Forbidden Zone* is] truly one of the only films of mine that never ages – great every New Year's Eve with a glass of acid."

Indeed, it would appear that anything and everything went during this low-budget and sometimes grueling production. Members of cast and crew slept on the film's stage, wearing gorilla suits to stay warm in the unheated warehouse. At one point during filming, while Matthew Bright was sitting on the set in costume, a heavy lighting stand fell on his head, cracking his skull. He was rushed to the hospital. Unwilling to waste precious time or money, Bright returned to work the very next day, whiplash and concussion be damned.

In 1982, after years of toil, *The Forbidden Zone* finally premiered in a handful of art house theatres…to a hearty chorus of boos – or cackles, depending on who you talk to. Chaotic and crass in its satirical stereotyping of race, class, sexuality and gender, the film generated inescapable, deeply wounded outrage. "HOLY FUCK!" Elfman exclaims. "BANNED FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN. ARSON THREATS TO THE NEW BEVERLY THEATRE IN LOS ANGELES. A few black friends from my old neighborhood were offended. Others weren't. *The Advocate* condemned the Rene Henderson character as being hyper-stereotypical gay."

"On the other hand, various gay underground publications wrote really glowing reviews, so you could say the homo community is certainly not homogenous! Susan Tyrell, our Queen, has always had a loyal gay following, and the film does have some killer musical numbers. And we had straight fans, I suppose, from the alt-bohemian side of the tracks."

Richard confirms that he "didn't give much thought to what the reaction would be. *The Forbidden Zone* is very much a 'human cartoon.' All characters, groups and ethnicities were given equal opportunity cartoony treatment. Where I grew up Crenshaw, the white, brown and Asian kids were the minorities. African Americans were the majority. And we all got along pretty well. […] Everyone joked good-naturedly about ethnicity. That's healthy, in my humble opinion. No disrespect – just a freedom to have a sense of humor!

"*[The] Forbidden Zone*, like the theatric aspects of the early Mystic Knights, was an eruption of my inner-clown imagination. There wasn't any forethought. Some people loved the Mystic Knights; some hated it." Elfman remains unphased by denunciations. "Anything new or different is bound to offend someone. You can't stop doing your art because of fear of causing offense, because someone will *always* take offense."

In fact, Elfman's tour de farce ended up offending a majority of critics. "After a summer of sporadic midnight shows […] the film disappeared. Poof! Gone." Many of the Mystic Knights swiftly moved on to other projects. Danny Elfman, today one of the most recognizable names in film scoring, continued to carry the Boingo torch for more than a decade and has composed music for the majority of Tim Burton's filmography in addition to countless other pictures. Marie-Pascale and Richard eventually divorced but have remained best friends and business partners. "She's an internationally acclaimed painter, divides her time between LA and France." Susan Tyrell eventually moved to Austin, Texas. Matthew Bright now "lives in Mexico, holed up in old monastery, writing brilliant, deranged stuff, coming to LA periodically to direct." Bright's script *Gun Crazy* brought Drew Barrymore renewed success, and "his writing and direction in Freeway broke Reese Witherspoon as an adult actress." Troubled and ill, Herve Villechaize tragically committed suicide in '93. "I still periodically hear from Kipper Kid Martin von Haselberg, a German aristocrat married to Bette Midler," says Elfman. "Brian Routhe, the other one, lives in England. They get together occasionally. I've lost track of Viva."

"THE FORBIDDEN ZONE is very much a 'human cartoon.' ALL CHARACTERS, GROUPS, and ETHNICITIES were given equal opportunity cartoony treatment." – Director Richard Elfman

Photo courtesy of Buzzine Magazine

As life evolved for cast and crew, the legend of the film was evolving too, and then: "About eight years ago, I put up my first website and got several hundred thousand hits from *Forbidden Zone* fans around the world! Total fucking surprise! I guess a few bootleg copies had made their way around." To put it mildly, yes. Throughout the 80's and 90's, wavering, gunky, fourth- and fifth-generation VHS copies of the black-and-white flick were swapped enthusiastically in underground tape-trading circles. Many of the same film geeks who adored fare like *MEET THE FEEBLES*, *THE APPLE*, *LIQUID TELEVISION*, *THE TERROR OF TINYTOWN*, *PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE*, *SPIDER BABY*, *FASTER PUSSYCAT, KILL, KILL!* and the like had developed an infatuation with the offbeat irreverence of Elfman and company. Love it or hate it, *The Forbidden Zone* is now widely considered one of the most notorious cult films of its decade.

"Thanks to my partner Jack Murphy, who cleared some music rights so we could legally release the film a few years ago, we are finally seeing a few bucks," says Elfman. An official, digitally remastered DVD edition of *The Forbidden Zone* went on sale from Fantoma in 2004 for Region One viewers, and in 2006 for Region Two by Arrow Film Distributors, Ltd. In 2008, Legend Films produced and premiered their colorized edition, fulfilling Elfman's thirty-year dream to see the movie as he'd always intended it. That version of the film is now also available as a download and on DVD from the snarky masterminds behind RiffTrax. *The Forbidden Zone's* fanbase continues to grow. "I'm flown to a different city every month or two, to a full auditorium. We were feted at NYC's Museum of Contemporary Art not long ago. The film has now been distributed around the world (again, thanks to Jack Murphy; also kudos to Carl Borack, who had the balls to bail us out [years ago] when our production budget ran out)." Just last year, the Los Angeles-based indie theatre company Sacred Fools put on a staged musical revival of *The Forbidden Zone*. "They did a great job, quite a large production for a small theater. Sold out for weeks and weeks."

Nowadays there's a lot of buzz about a possible sequel. Elfman's enthusiasm for the impending project is palpable: "Ma and Pa Kettle leave the depressed Dust Bowl with their kids, Stinky and Petunia, and drive their old jalopy down to Crenshaw in South Central Los Angeles. Stinky is a hyperactive twelve-year-old, played by a hyperactive fifty-year-old; Petunia is a lumbering thirteen-year-old slut, played by an actress over eighteen (hopefully). Ma is a corncob-pipe-smoking inbred and Pa is a craven, drunken carnival geek [who developed a] bad disposition even before his carnival job folded after the last dust storm. Together, they hope to find a better life in California. Unfortunately, the little shack they rent has a basement connected to… THE SIXTH DIMENSION. My daughter-in-law, Jenna Elfman, will do a surrealistic aerial dance routine […] I'll get brother Danny to reprise his Devil role, singing a knockout version of 'St. James Infirmary Blues,' and we'll shoot the Crenshaw scenes in Ghana. Crenshaw will look like a cartoon version of 1910 Harlem, but everyone will be incredible dancers and acrobats from the Ghana National Dance Company. And we'll shoot it digitally. I'll never use film again! The new tech makes filmmaking easier."

In the meantime, Elfman spends his days appearing at various *Forbidden Zone*-related events, running the independent, arts-and-culture-centric *Buzzine Magazine*, spending time with family and friends, and remains as avid a gourmand of music and cinema as ever, counting Eric Satie and *The Third Man* among his current favorites. "I go through tons of music, looking for further visual inspiration. We have some killer stuff chosen for FZ2." A short list of his own favored cult classics includes *Evil Dead 2*, *Freeway* (written and directed by his old chum Matthew Bright), and *Gun Crazy* (also written by Bright), Carlos Suara's *Flamenco Carmen,* and *Bring Me the Head of Alfredo Garcia*.

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Stills Courtesy of Legend Films

MEL GORDON is a writer, a professor, a lector, a New York Actor's Studio alumni, and above all, a historian. Unflinching and thorough, the man has made it his life's quest to expose (and scratch) all manner of underbellies. Whether the topic is Weimar Berlin, Expressionist theater, or Jewish studies, Gordon relishes in excavating taboo details that would make many furrow-browed professors squirm with disapproval or, at the very least, skepticism.

Archiving his vast knowledge of theater, art, Jewish history, and the sex trade, Gordon has gifted the world with such titles as *Hanussen: Hitler's Jewish Clairvoyant, The Seven Addictions and Five Professions of Anita Berber, The Stanislavsky Technique: A Workbook for Actors, The Grand Guignol,* and the recently published Siegel and Shuster's *Funnyman: The First Jewish Superhero* (coauthored with Thomas Andrae). Gordon's best-known book, *Voluptuous Panic: The Erotic World of Weimar Berlin*, is a heavily visual, delectably obscene catalog of Weimar's most intimate and calamitous affairs, from free-flowing opium and nudist priests to just about every aspect of prostitution imaginable.

Because of his playful, accessible language and the unorthodox abundance of illustrations in his books, Gordon has acquired the reputation of a research prankster in some academic circles. In the following piece, he delivers a more straightforward overview of the work and evolution of the Expressionist artist and Bauhaus theater personage, Lothar Schreyer. Much like his biographer, Schreyer was a professor and professional troublemaker. This account of his life is but one slim volume located in a secluded nook of the living, breathing library that is the singular Mel Gordon.

By the time the word *Expressionism* became widely used in Germany in the years 1910-11, it had already acquired magical properties. It denoted a kind of primitive anti-rational, anti-classical, non-French creation; various graphic artists, writers, philosophers, and dancers from central Europe began to label their work Expressionist. Without a center or an adjudicating leader, without any authoritative pronouncements or clearly stated manifestos, a trend, rather than a movement, was growing up around this term. In one Berlin art gallery, Sturm, founded by Herwarth Walden and promoted in its influential periodical *Der Sturm*, pieces from nearly every contemporary European avant-garde movement – French cubism, Italian Futurism, and others – were gathered together under the single heading of Expressionism.

Between 1912 and 1917, hundreds of amateur poets turned their attention to the creation of Expressionist playtexts. Published in the dozens of short-lived cultural journals that seemed to flower wherever young Germans could find crude printing facilities, these dramas expressed very similar conflicts and themes: the hypertrophied struggle of generations, the destruction of bourgeois values, the realization of higher cosmic goals, the sexual awakening of adolescence made political. While many of these texts were accompanied with illustrations and woodcuts, many Expressionist playwrights plainly worried about what these plays would look like on the stage, how they would be realized in the acting and scenography. If the Expressionist theater offered up a Utopian space "where man explodes in front of man," what would happen when the actual performances proved to be less than inflammatory? This was the major aesthetic concern of the literary Expressionists.

Then in 1917 and 1918, frenzied reports of Expressionist productions in Dresden, Frankfurt, and Mannheim created a stir throughout the German-speaking world. In Berlin, Central Europe's theatrical capital, the appetite of the intelligentsia was whetted with each new description. Finally, in the autumn of 1918, the first Expressionist evening in Berlin was announced. Mounted by the newly formed Sturmbühne, this staging was met with mixed reactions. The insanely ecstatic screaming, the contorted gestures, the father-son conflicts that the audience had read about in other Expressionist productions were nowhere to be found. Instead there was a highly controlled system of sound-speech, simple abstract staging, and highly choreographed movements. The result: most of the spectators only experienced confusion, irritation, laughter, boredom. Just a handful of the critics were aware that Lothar Schreyer, the Sturmbühne's founder, was advancing a different kind of Expressionist performance, one that would prefigure the work of the Bauhaus theater and provide a solid, if indirect, influence on the Modern Dance movement.

Born in 1886 in a town outside Dresden, Schreyer studied art history and law at the universities of Heidelberg, Berlin, and Leipzig. After receiving a law degree in 1910, he suddenly turned his attention to art and the theater. By 1912, Schreyer found himself acting as a producer with the Hamburg Schauspielhaus. Two years later, on a visit to Berlin, he persuaded Walden, who was editing *Der Sturm,* to publish a number of his poems. Then in 1914, like many other future Expressionists, Schreyer went to war, only to be released from service after some eighteen months.

Once freed of wartime duties in Berlin, Schreyer was made editor of *Der Sturm* by Walden. Immediately, Schreyer set to work on transforming *Der Sturm* from an immaculately printed magazine to an influential cultural apparatus. Soon a Sturm Circle, a *Sturm* school, and even a series of *Sturm* evenings appeared. Featuring the recitations of Rudolf Blümner, a popular ex-Reinhardt actor who quit the theater because of its show business intrusions, and Walter Mehring, the young pre-Dada sound poet, these *Sturm*-evenings were devoted to "word artistry," not literature of any sort. Inspired by the linguistic experiments of the Futurists and the dramatic poems of August Stramm, Schreyer and his friends staged over one hundred sensational, if sometimes incomprehensible, *Sturm*-evenings. Especially well noted was Blümner's vocal ability to project huge, resonating vowel sounds before dropping to the softest whisper.

It was just at this time that Schreyer published his first statements on the unborn Expressionist theater. Following Vassily Kandinsky's abstract-mystical stage theories, he maintained that the new theater should be neither naturalistic nor stylized: the new theater must be pure, absolute, in the way that nonrepresentational painting and sculpture were absolute, without any lifelike referents. For Schreyer, the perfect performance consisted of pure sound, pure movement, pure color, and pure form.

Schreyer was most concerned with structuring theatrical elements in spiritual and dynamic compositions of synesthesia, where each of the performance's audio and visional components became linked up with another, adhering to a mystical pattern. Although Schreyer's scenic theories and otherworldly language show strong resemblances to the French Symbolists, his acknowledged influences came from certain Christian mystics and Goethe. For instance, Schreyer's theories on stage color exhibit both medieval and modern interests:

COLOR MEANING

Silver lighting expresses natural illumination.
Gold expresses the supernatural.
Blue expresses the binding principles of belief.
Green expresses development or aging.
Yellow expresses strength or contamination.

COLOR SHAPE

White presses to an egg shape.
Blue stretches out forms into spheres.
Violet divides form.
Orange reproduces form.

Like his predecessor Kandinsky, Schreyer, more than anything else, wanted to "touch the strings of the spectator's soul," producing powerful, nonintellectual effects. While other Expressionist directors attempted to present Expressionist visions to the spectator via the actors' experiences and stage sets, Schreyer wished to use his performers and his Expressionist environment as lightning rods to induce visions in the spectator. Only an absolute actorless theater could accomplish that, Schreyer claimed.

But among the emergent pantheon of Expressionist playwrights and poets, only one writer truly enthused Schreyer and continued to influence his unconventional visionary quest: August Stramm. A high-ranking bureaucrat in the Imperial Postal Authority and later a captain in the Prussian Army, Stramm was an unlikely avant-gardist. Yet his weird telegraphic style, lack of narrative interest, and sensational exploration of unfettered desire made his short scripts ideal springboards for outré and sexually charged productions.

ANXIOUS ABOUT ADVERSE PUBLICITY, SCHREYER REQUESTED THAT NONE OF THE CRITICS WRITE ABOUT THE PRODUCTIONS. UNFORTUNATELY FOR HISTORIANS, ALL OF THEM ABIDED BY SCHREYER'S WISHES.

A typical beginning from a Stramm play, *Happening* (1914):

Garden. Darkness. Music from afar. Human tangle.
She: To dominate?!
He (rudely): **To dominate!**
She laughs.
He is embarrassed.
She runs away, laughing.
He stares.
The Girl (from out of the darkness, touches his arm): **You.**
He stares.
The Girl (annoyed): **You.**
He (indifferent): **I.**
The Girl stomps angrily.
He stomps.
The Girl (steps in front of him): **To torture.**
He laughs in her face.
The Girl starts to cry.
He embraces.
The Girl leans against him.

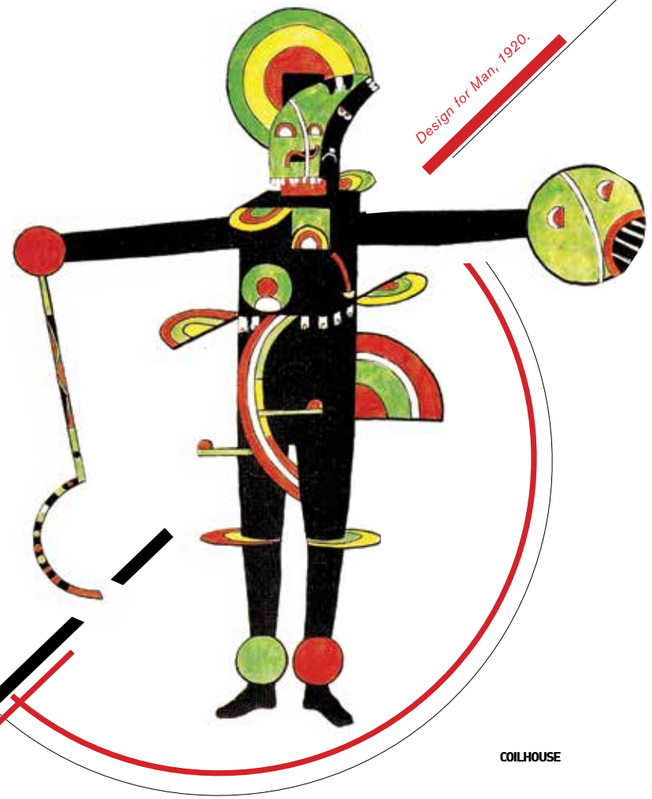
Advertised in *Der Sturm* and Schreyer's own new periodical, *Sturmbühne*, as "Expressionist theater," the Sturmbühne's production of Stramm's *Sancta Susanna* opened on October 15, 1918. This was to be Schreyer's first realization of his scenic alchemy. Despite an audience limited to subscribers of *Der Sturm* and newspaper critics, Schreyer requested police protection – perhaps more a manifestation of his unfashionable apolitical beliefs than any aesthetic fear. Instead of highly made-up, emotionally crazed performers, gigantic, almost nonhuman figures appeared, making strange, unintelligible, singsong noises. Against a brightly colored backdrop of black, yellow, green, and red, an arm appeared, and then an oversized mask, then the chant of a bizarre litany. Expecting something quite different, the opening night audience quickly responded in restlessness and irritation. The next day's newspaper reporters ridiculed the Sturmbühne's "megaphone art," their "secret speech and limb exercises." Many wondered how this could be called Expressionism and suggested that Schreyer was only attracted to the titular commercial aspect of the word.

Schreyer was devastated by these morning-after critiques. *Sancta Susanna* went just as he had planned. Each performer was instructed to first find his "base note" and his "internal sound"; Schreyer rehearsed each actor until a spiritual dimension was experienced. When that occurred, the Sturmbühne's sound speakers could reproduce any "vibration of the soul" vocally. Granted, the simple megaphones and the thick cardboard costumes distorted certain low-pitched sounds; the performance was enacted as well as it might have been.

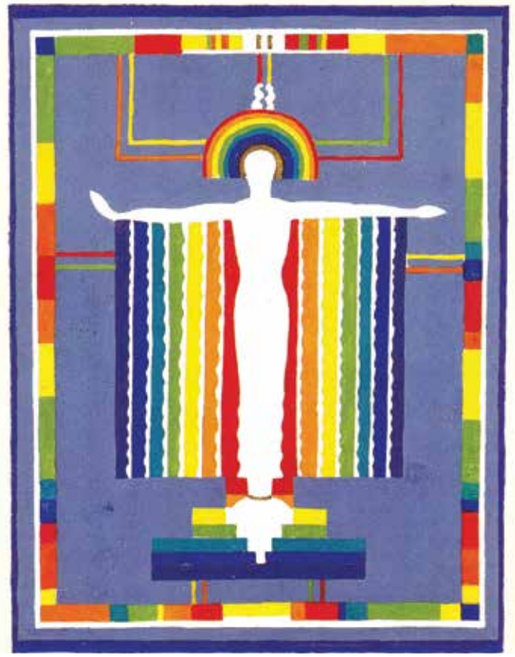
Although some later reviews proved much kinder, Schreyer made the decision to return to his native Hamburg. There, in 1919, he founded the Kampfbühne, a sister theater to the Sturmbühne. With the assistance of a local organization of two to three hundred called the Friends of Expressionism, Schreyer was able to stage premiere productions of Expressionist plays as well as original adaptations. Using students from the local academies, Schreyer and his Kampfbühne mounted eight productions in Hamburg.

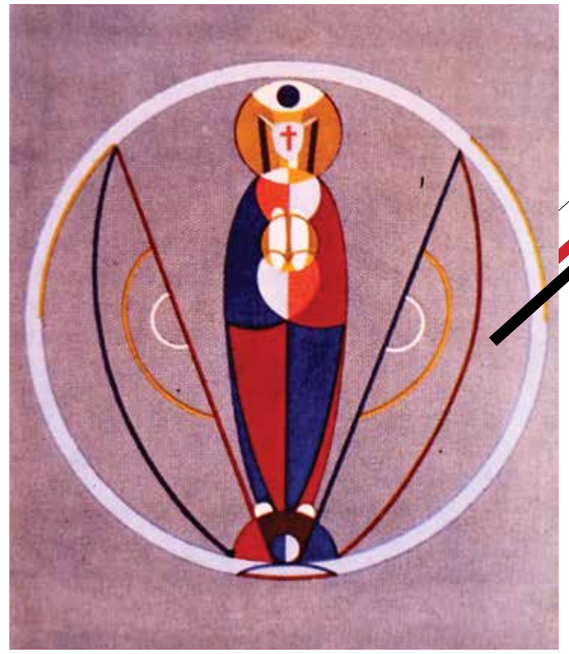
The first Kampfbühne evening, which consisted of two plays by Stramm, *The Bride of the Moor and Powers*, opened on October 21, 1919. Anxious about adverse publicity, Schreyer requested that none of the critics write about the productions. Unfortunately for historians, all of them abided by Schreyer's wishes. Little is known about the Stramm evening, except for the Kampfbühne's use of an actual West African xylophone to create the "inner music" for *The Bride*. Moving more toward occult and religious themes, Schreyer staged an anonymously written nativity drama from 1589 called *A Crib Play* in St. Catherine's Cathedral on Christmas Eve, 1919.

The Kampfbühne presented four productions in 1920: *The Death of Empedocles*, a dramatization of a Hölderlin poem with a violin solo; *Walden's Transgressions*, with ten-foot-high masks; and two plays by Schreyer, *Man*, a mystical performance that was musically scored for a five-foot drum with "magical powers," and *Crucifixion*. After some encouragement from



Design for Man, 1920.





Left: Design for Light-Dancer, 1922 (Bauhaus Workshop)

Right: Design for Moon-Play, 1923 (Bauhaus Workshop).

Walden and Blümner, Schreyer traveled to Berlin that spring to reactivate the Sturmbühne. Working with his old Sturm-troupe, Schreyer presented *Man* at Reinhardt's Deutsches Theater, one of the most prestigious in Germany. But Reinhardt himself found the production too esoteric, too cultish, and declined to further any other Sturmbühne projects.

In September 1920, with scenic assistance from Schreyer, Walden decided to stage two of his pieces in Dresden, a city traditionally more sympathetic to artistic experiment. Announced as "living art," Walden's Sturmbühne presentations of *Instinct* and a pantomime, *Four Deaths of Fiametta*, were surprisingly well-received. Evidently, there were audiences for this kind of performance, but not in Berlin, oddly enough. Early in 1921, Schreyer directed his last production for the Kampfbühne, *Child-Deaths*.

By 1921, Expressionism in the theater was quickly losing its novelty throughout Germany. When the founder of the Bauhaus, Walter Gropius, offered Schreyer a teaching post in the summer of 1921, he immediately accepted. For Schreyer, now deeply involved with primitive Christianity and visionary art, the Bauhaus in Weimar provided an ideal situation: a place for experiment devoid of petty financial and critical restraints.

Given a studio and a theater laboratory, Schreyer started work at once. A performance, *Song of Mary,* was enacted before a huge, abstract tapestry in the fall of 1921. There and in subsequent pieces presented in 1922, *Dance of the Wind Spirits* and *The Trooper's Dance*, Schreyer was developing the concept of sacred space, the merging of two- and three-dimensional art with human movement. Although popular as a teacher, Schreyer's mystical methodologies and medieval terminology began to create friction with the more functionally-minded instructors and students. Along with other Expressionist-influenced teachers, he resigned in March of that year. A totally abstract performance that gave the appearance of magically moving sculpture, *Moonplay*, presented on February 17, 1923, was Schreyer's last Bauhaus project.

From 1924 to 1927, Schreyer taught art and art history at various schools in Dresden and Berlin. In 1927, he returned to Hamburg to work in a publishing house. After converting to Catholicism in 1933, Schreyer turned his full attention to the study of ancient and medieval Christian art, producing a number of significant texts. Without any left-wing political affiliations, Schreyer suffered little under the Nazi regime.

In one of his last books, *The Expressionist Theater* (Hamburg, 1948), Schreyer described, but only briefly, the work of the Sturm and Kampfbühne. Instead he detailed the theories and productions of all those who worked toward an absolute theater, people like Paul Scheerbart, Kandinsky, Aleksandr Tairov, Tommaso Marinetti, Stramm, and Oskar Schlemmer. For Schreyer, all of them attempted a pure visionary theater and therefore were Expressionists. Schreyer died in 1966, better known in Germany as an art historian than a visionary Expressionist director and writer.

Score key for Crucifixion text, 1920.

RUCIFIXION

BY LOTHAR SCHREYER

(TRANSLATED BY MEL GORDON)

In 1920, at the Hamburg Kampfbühne Workshop, Schreyer designed and published an oversized promptbook of his play *Crucifixion*. It was printed in an edition of five hundred from wooden blocks, and hand-colored. Both art object and textural experiment, Schreyer's *Crucifixion* book was an attempt to indicate all of the essential elements of his Expressionist production, which included not only the standard dramatic dialogue, stage direction, and costuming, but also the rhythm, tone, and pitch of the words in exact conjunction with the movement sequence and hand-arm gestures of the characters.

No German playtext had ever been so precisely scored or choreographed. It provided the reader with one of the few historical documents of Expressionist dramaturgy.

Costume/Symbol for Man.

BELOW IS A **TRANSLATION OF** SCHREYER'S DIALOGUE

THE MOTHER: I suffer.

THE MISTRESS: Cross crucifies us.

THE MAN: Wounded feet of men carry us.

THE MOTHER: My heart is blood.

THE MISTRESS: Never do I flower. Root-protected I grow.

THE MAN: World circles round us. Ring of stars irradiates round the world.

THE MOTHER: My heart blazes at night.

THE MAN: We wander, dream-wander, wake-wander, far.

THE MISTRESS: Dust is in wounds. Lonely eyes pierce me.

THE MOTHER: Search, ask. Nothing. We imagine nothing.

THE MISTRESS: I want to overthrow with arm in arm. Flee before me feet. No one heals the wounds.

THE MAN: In the ocean-depths drips the blood. In the earth depths beats the heart.

THE MOTHER: My child is born.

THE MISTRESS: Men take root in my breast. People cast me aside.

THE MOTHER: My child sleeps in my womb.

THE MISTRESS: Man groans in the thigh-dance.

THE MOTHER: My child goes away from me. And plays far away from me and departs.

THE MAN: Young men watch a bride. Boys pray to moonflowers on star-vines that illuminate the world.

THE MOTHER: In my dead child lives a strange person. My son returns home and lies. My son.

THE MISTRESS: I love.

THE MOTHER: I give away my son. Without farewell, my son departs.

THE MISTRESS: I am.

THE MAN: We perform all tasks. Flames break at midnight. Watch, watch. Human wounds burst. Monstrous. Greatly fixed around. Abyss darkening, destroying us. Watch, watch. Finger in the wound. Kisses in the wound. Whips in the wound. Moon turns pale.

THE MOTHER: World warns, my child. World howls. Men raise hands. Men raise feet. Brains star. Hearts sun. My blood drips empty. My son quiets me. My son departs. Act about. Act about. Act about. I search. My son goes into the blood. Flowers. Earth. Children sing in battle. Men fall. Sons. Lower. Lower. World howls. Before me, my son is silent. My son caresses his sick animal. Earth quakes. Corpses rest in my heart. Faraway, my son visits me. My child suffers the death of hunger. The death of thirst. My son. My son lies naked on stones. Heart-wound burns in light. My son is silent.

THE MISTRESS: Men scream. Men go into battle. I dance. I sacrifice. Virgin kneels her knee in the dream. Earth blooms in my womb. Storm blows me in ravines. Scatters. Bloom. Break. Pain destroys under thigh and hands and mouth. I temper your homesickness. I close your eyes. I untie your human clothes. Men grope about me. Men ravish me. The dead men irradiate. Children. Lover. Virgin.

THE MAN: Man's birth. Women beat us with sin. Innocent children die with us. The rotting spirit blows poison. Noon devours the world. The dark birds peck at our heart. We prepare for the Last Supper. Wake up. Wake up.

THE MISTRESS: Female sex. Male sex. I shatter.

THE MOTHER: I carry boys. I carry girls. Ripped apart.

THE MISTRESS: Stars circle. Stars don't come down here.

THE MOTHER: Lights fall. My womb circles bloody.

THE MISTRESS: Mother Earth.

THE MOTHER: Home sickness.

THE MISTRESS: Pushed out. Plague whips my flesh.

THE MOTHER: Murdered flowers. Cracked stone. Slaughtered animals. I devour the End. Gestures.

THE MISTRESS: Pierced through the heart. Abandoned. Rejected. Nameless. Remorseless. Empty.

THE MISTRESS: Crucify…

THE MOTHER and ***THE MISTRESS:*** Preserve the earth. Nail in blinded glaze.

THE MISTRESS: Heart. Skin.

THE MOTHER: Spear in heart. Sword in skin.

THE MOTHER and ***THE MISTRESS:*** Destroy. Annihilate. Strike. Nothing. In your arms. Purify. Take. Extinguish. Fire. Fire. Give away. Nothing.

THE MAN: The Crucifix is empty.

THE MOTHER and ***THE MISTRESS:*** God is dead.

THE MAN: The Crucifix is empty.

THE MOTHER: Child. *(Cries as Mistress calls her.)*

THE MISTRESS: Mother. Mother. Mother. Mother. Mother. Mother. Mother. Mother. Mother. Mother. Mother. Judgment.

THE MOTHER, ***THE MISTRESS,*** and **THE MAN**: Savior. Savior. Savior.

THE MAN: Confusion. Illumination. Change. Earth-heart bends to kiss. World collapsing. Peace in shape. Vision. Home.

THE MOTHER: Mother.

THE MISTRESS: Child.

THE MAN: To know. To have. Star seize around. Heaven-heart radiates all. Dancer. Revealer. Singer. Giver. Womb.

THE MISTRESS: Dead.

THE MOTHER: Love.

THE MAN: Light. To be. All light. All being. All we. All nothing. Allness.

THE MOTHER, ***THE MISTRESS,*** and **THE MAN:** Savior. Savior. Savior.

(Characters dance.)

THE MOTHER and ***THE MISTRESS:*** Doors open. Men open. Prepare the bed. Wedding. Holy time. The dove sings. The lamp jumps. Eat the bread. Drink the blood. Tongues blaze the world-word. Wordless. Holy. Holy.

THE MAN: Born on the Cross. Wandered through sorrow. Died in world-womb. We separate from men. Life-sacred. Risen up. Man's torment. World embrace. Consciousness of doom. Mindless of light. Sink in self. We carry you. Make yourself glow. Beam. Poor world.

THE MISTRESS: You take me. You give me my body, my flesh vessel. Clear fire pours from a star. My hand strokes a tired man. My lips kiss a mute mouth. My foot goes to you. Tears wash the dust. My heart dries your blood wounds. For you, I am a maiden. Around our sin. Sin. Disclose you. Raise you. Torture body. Heart cross. Beat in me. Vomit. Lift the stone. Mankind sacrifice.

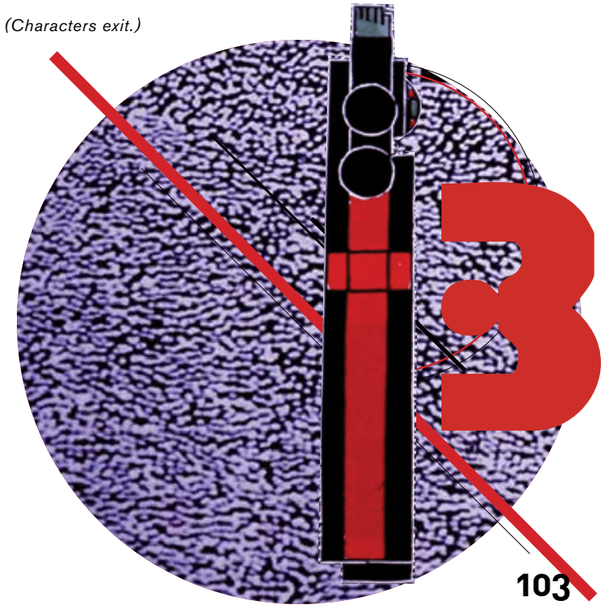
THE MOTHER: Earth-sperm cast into me. The people go. The people tread on. Night falls on brother and sister. Seize your hands. Cold. Feel your lips. Kneel before your modest flesh. Heart destroys man. Earth spills on the small light. Child-mother burns up. Storm over. Sun under. Wilderness longs. Mother world. Wonder. Death dies. Love dies. Love over us. Death over us. Come little child. Let go, man. You, child.

THE MAN: Sinful sinner. Dear mistress. I receive you, Mother. Endure the sorrow. We are fallen. We are lost. The stone is rolled away. Light lights. The voice is silent. Wander into us. Alone. Cross crucifies us.

THE MOTHER: I suffer.

THE MOTHER, ***THE MISTRESS,*** and **THE MAN:** We wander. Dream-wander. Wide awake, wander, far. Savior strange. Through mankind. Scorn blood. Mock blood. Hate blood. Love damned. Pain in the poor world. Far in the poor world. Awake. World. Awake.

(Characters exit.)



Karl Heiz, Berlin

56 Entrants at the 2009 world beard & mustache championship

Magnificent Specimens

Portraits by Dave Mead

In the spring of 2009, photographer Dave Mead traveled to Anchorage, Alaska to attend the annual World Beard & Mustache Championship. "Only taking time for one bathroom break and a slice of pizza," Mead spent eleven straight hours shooting thousands of pictures of men sporting some of the world's most elegant, creative and elaborate facial hair. Images from Mead's resulting series, *Magnificent Specimens*, have since been featured by *The Wall Street Journal* and the *LA Times*, and exhibited in galleries nationwide.

"I was drawn to them stylistically and to the manly comedy of it all," Mead told *Tribeza Magazine* in a recent interview. "I loved the idea of them styling themselves. The individual mustaches and beards are mighty but, in the end, it's all about presentation. Each of these guys, though macho, appears a bit awkward and vulnerable to me." It's true – that wee bit of yearbook photo bashfulness present in many of these men's faces is hard to miss…as is the fierce glint of individuality in their eyes. They are magnificent, indeed.

Framed and unframed prints of these bewhiskered beauties are currently for sale through Mead's *Big Cartel* shop.

Introduction by Meredith Yayanos

Adam , Los Angeles, CA
Allen, Austin, TX
Benjamin, Los Angeles, CA
Bernd, Berlin
Brent, Anchorage, AK

Brent, Austin, TX
Brett, Granite-Falls, WA
Brian, Washington, DC
Bryan, Austin, TX
Burke, Olympia, WA

Caleb, Fairbanks, AK
Cory, Austin, TX
Craig, Austin, TX
Dan, Los Angeles, CA
Daniel, Detroit, MI

Adam, Chicago, IL

Dave, Ontario
David, Sterling, AK
Dennis, Woodbridge, VA

Devin, Springfield, MO
George, Fairbanks, AK
Gerhard, Pforzheim

Hans Peter, Rheinsheim
Ike, Santa Maria, CA
Jack, San Francisco, CA

Jake, London
Jerem, Kenai, AK
Jeremy, Anchorage, AK
John, Toronto
Jordan, Cathedral City, CA

Julian, Swampscott, MA
Kees, Netherland, Holland
Kyle, Toronto
Markus, Schömberg, Germany
Max, Berlin

Mike, Riverview, MI
Neal, Anchorage, AK
Reinhard, Neubausen
Rodney, Alexandria, VA
Ryan, Groselle, MI

Ryan, San Dimas, CA
Satan, Hades
Shawn, Anchorage, AK

Simon, Normon, OK
Stuart, Colorado Springs, CO
Tim, Anchorage, AK

Toot, Lake Tahoe, CA
Xavier, Boston, MA
Zachary, Livonia, MI

Alexander, Los Angeles, CA

Steven, San Francisco, CA

CUT &
FOLD &
BEND &
CREATE.

{12.12.3} HEX TWIST RESCH BUMP

Tessellation

ROBERT LANG'S **WORK** sits at the **INTERSECTION OF MATHEMATICS**, **ORIGAMI**, and **SCIENCE**. A former **NASA** engineer and physicist with over forty patents, Lang can TRANSFORM AN UNCUT SHEET OF PAPER into an impossibly COMPLEX THREE-DIMENSIONAL SHAPE: a scorpion, a pond turtle, a rock climber, a Black Forest cuckoo clock.

Recognized as one of the **WORLD'S LEADING THEORISTS** of the mathematics of origami, Lang does not shy away from employing technology to further his craft. He's one of the FIRST ORIGAMI ARTISTS to SCORE PAPER WITH A LASER CUTTER, and his contributions to the field include two freeware programs called TreeMaker and ReferenceFinder. These programs, **WRITTEN** by Lang **IN C++**, enable artists to convert sketches into crease patterns and folding sequences. Through his interest in the science of origami, Lang has come to consult on several fascinating projects on its industrial and practical applications. He designed folding patterns for a **GERMAN AIRBAG MANUFACTURER** and helped create a **FOLDING SPACE TELESCOPE LENS**.

In the spirit of Coilhouse Issue 06's angular, geometric theme, Robert Lang has crafted a piece known in the genre of **ABSTRACT ORIGAMI AS A TESSELLATION**: a repeating set of folded pleats and twists. In particular, this is a RESCH BUMP TESSELLATION.

LANG GOES ON TO EXPLAIN:

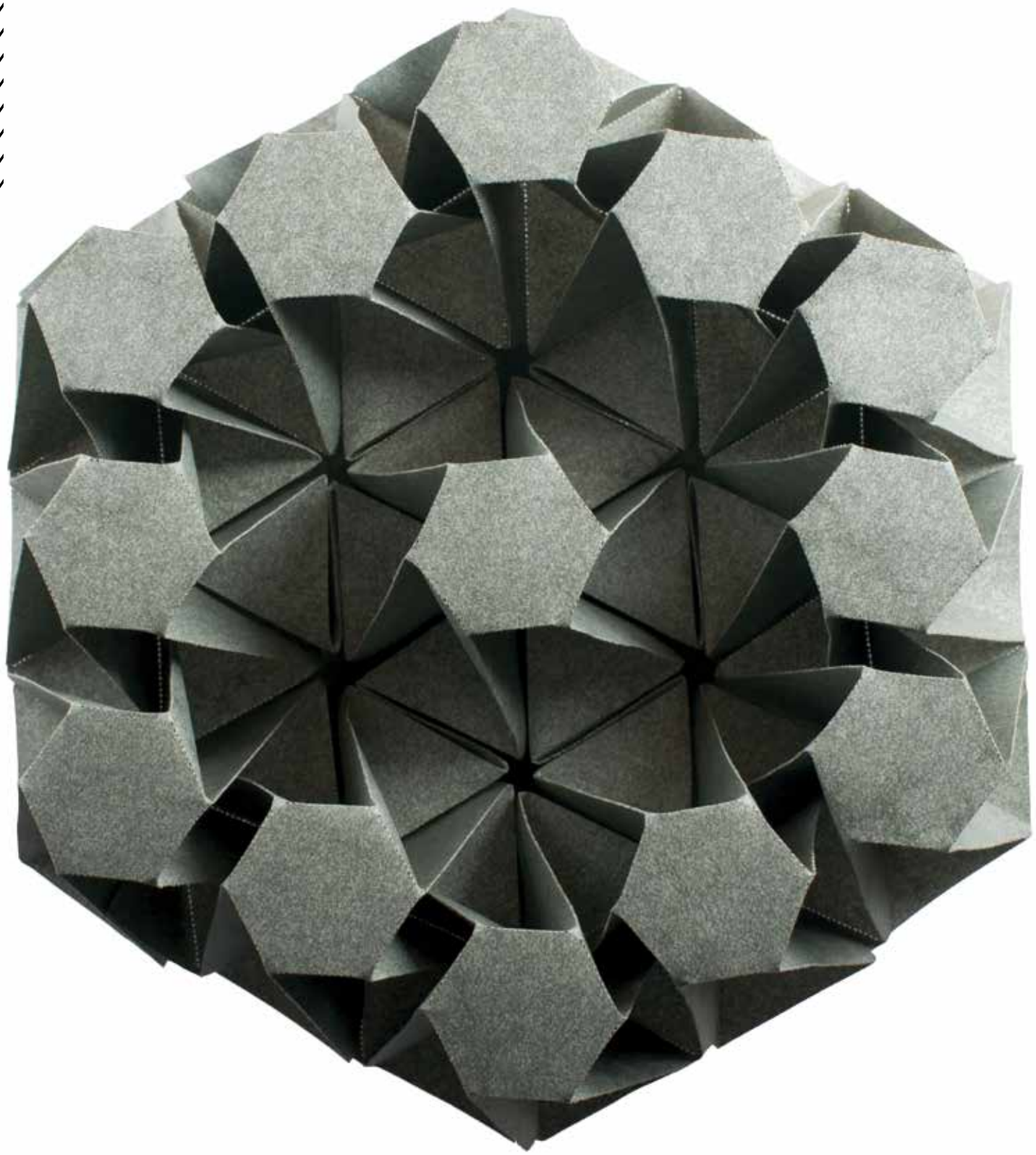
Though most people's impressions of origami are of recognizable objects – birds, fish, flowers – the oldest forms of origami in Japan are non-representational, abstract forms. However, abstract folded paper art is by no means confined to Japan and traditional origami. It has numerous roots, including the work of Josef Albers and the Bauhaus movement in the 1920s, and a host of artists around the world have discovered and rediscovered the beauty that arises when folding is taken as the primary, if not sole, means of creating a visual form.

One of the pioneers of American artistic folding was computer scientist and artist Ron Resch, who, along with fellow computer scientist David Huffman, laid the foundation for several branches of artistic non-representational folding that were eventually absorbed into the broader field of international origami.

Within the origami world, a prominent non-representational strand was the field of origami tessellations, periodic (or sometimes quasi-periodic or self-similar) patterns composed of folds. This genre was explored by Yoshihed Momotani, Shuzo Fujimoto, and Toshikazu Kawasaki from the 1970s and 1980s onward, and the field began to grow exponentially in the 1990s with works by Chris K. Palmer, Eric Gjerde, and many others who came to the fore.

My own interest in tessellations was kindled by Palmer's work in the late 1990s, and at about the same time I met Ron Resch and became acquainted with his work in periodic folded patterns. Back in the 1960s, Resch had described several examples of folded patterns that had a common conceptual basis. Investigating these, I found that they were based on a simple vocabulary that combined the notion of a periodic tiling with three-dimensional stars, pinwheels, and solid forms. By choosing tilings that met certain constraints at their vertices, and choosing the appropriate 3D solid forms that satisfied other constraints, one could build up arbitrary "pixel arrays" of these solid forms that crystallized into a single crease pattern that made it possible to fold the entire shape from a single uncut sheet of paper. In honor of Resch (who died in 2009), I have been calling the family "Resch Bump Tessellations."

Unlike most traditional origami, which is folded in a simple, sequential, step-by-step fashion, Resch Bump Tessellations (and many other origami tessellations) have a holistic property: all of the folds must come together at once. There is no "first fold" or "last fold" – only "all folds." This makes them particularly challenging to put together. The artist rapidly runs out of fingers to hold and actuate all of the moving facets. It takes a certain amount of skill and experience to place the pre-folded pattern under compression, nudge all the vertices to point up or down according to the crease pattern, and then bring all of the folds together at once.

With this pattern, whose name "{12.12.3} Hex Twist Resch Bump Tessellation" encodes a description of its underlying structure, I chose to give the crease pattern an irregular border that effectively created tabs that could be tucked into pockets so that the entire structure holds together without glue or fasteners. Portions of the structure are under tension; others are under compression. The resulting faceted tensegrity exists in a state of dynamic balance – a balance that is echoed by a perceptual balance between the visual impression of disconnected planes and surfaces, and the knowledge that everything remains origami, one uncut sheet, carefully folded.

INTRODUCTION NADYA LEV
article + origami **ROBERT LANG**
PHOTOGRAPHY IAN BAKER